

GRACE LORRAINE



DOUGLAS SLADEN

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Grace Lorraine

Grace Lorraine : A Romance : By Douglas Sladen

*Author of "The Douglas Romance," "His German Wife,"
"The Unholy Estate," "A Japanese Marriage," etc.*



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NEW YORK:
BRENTANO'S
1917

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DEDICATED TO
STEWART McARTHUR K.C.,
OF MELBOURNE, AUSTRALIA,
IN MEMORY OF
THE UNDERGRADUATE DAYS WE SPENT TOGETHER
AT THE MELBOURNE UNIVERSITY
IN THE EARLY EIGHTIES,
AND THE MANY HAPPY DAYS
WHICH I HAVE BEEN PRIVILEGED TO SPEND WITH HIM
IN THIS YEAR OF GRACE

1916

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VIA PACIS

The name VIA PACIS seemed to have impressed its character on the whole peninsula.

Two years after the War had begun, beyond the presence of mine-sweepers in the inlet and the absence of young men in the village, there was but one departure from THE WAY OF PEACE.

One home had paid its blood-tax, leaving Grace Lorraine her romance, under the shadow of the New Taormina which was rising on the cliffs of Devon.

GRACE LORRAINE

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCING GRACE LORRAINE AND ROGER WYNYARD

IT was a hot afternoon in the earlier part of July, 1914. Roger Wynyard and Grace Lorraine had just finished their tea on the tennis lawn.

The girl was very, very lovely; her features were patrician in their clear-cut beauty; her cheeks were as delicate in colour as a wild rose, and in texture as satin; her hair was glitteringly fair; she was her name personified.

She was resting, after three hard sets, on a deck chair, and regarding with admiration the splendid young Englishman, who had just shown the hopelessness of the best woman tennis-player's standing up against a first-class man.

He was seated on the grass in front of her, with his hands clasped round his knees, gazing at her rapturously—a tall, strong boy, of three or four and twenty, whose charm lay not so much in right-down handsomeness, as in the expression of frankness and fearlessness which comes so naturally to those who excel in active sports.

Something seemed to be troubling him, but he had been gazing at her for several minutes before he got it out.

“What a pity it is that you are so rich, Grace!”

She looked at him with steady affection in her candid eyes, which were almost violet in the depth of their blue.

"I know what you mean, Roger, but I can assure you that it is not that which stands in the way. I couldn't marry you if you did me the honour of asking me once more."

"I shan't have the face to ask you, but do tell me why you have refused me in advance."

"There are two chief reasons—the greatest is that you take no interest in the things which make life worth living. I don't think you know the name of a single picture which has been painted, or a single book which has been written, by the artists and authors who have been working at Via Pacis for more than twenty years. You do not bestow a thought on these clever people, except as givers of teas in a rather isolated village, and parents of boys and girls of the tennis age. That is one grievance; and the other is that, because you have a little income of your own, you dawdle through life, pretending that you are going to be a barrister, but really giving up your whole time to sport. I love sport—I enjoy having a game of golf or tennis with you awfully, but I think that it's a miserable business to go through life thinking of nothing else. I sometimes hardly have the patience to talk to you about it!"

"Steady on, old girl! Don't be so jolly cross about it!"

"I'm not cross, Roger—it is too difficult to be cross with you. I'm only trying to make you more worthy of yourself."

"I hate being worthy of myself! It's too much like the Catechism. You are talking to one whose grandfather, in spite of being the dearest chap in the world, has been compelled by the exigences of his profession to talk to yours truly as if he was a Sunday School."

"Well, I've said my say, Roger, and perhaps you think that I had no right to say it, but you're the greatest friend I ever had, so I should have been rather a sneak not to say it."

"Be a sneak about this, Grace."

"How can you say this, Roger, when you are so red-hot about the Public-School code? Why doesn't the Public-School code stop slacking—the sort of slacking you go in for?"

"What a tyrant we are to-day, Gracie!"

"Supposing anything was to happen, and your people lost their money—where would you be?"

"I could always enlist."

"That would be better than the life you're leading now."

"I think it's rather fun your talking like this, Grace, when you're going to inherit this splendid old place and the lands all round it, as far as you can see!"

"It is not so odd as it looks. My mother's father, Senator Falkland, was one of the rich men in the State of Georgia, but when the four years of Civil War were over, he had only a few hundreds a year left. We in England never think about war, but there is such a thing left in the world."

"I've heard something about the Falklands. It's only natural that it should have made you . . . I forget the word."

"Morbid?"

"Yes, that's it. Cheer up! I'll let you take me round your super-tropical garden."

"Sub-tropical, Roger."

"Sub-tropical garden, and show me the oranges and lemons and those spiky things."

"Aloes?"

"Yes, aloes, and palm-trees, and all the other things which ought not to be growing here, if it will make you feel better."

The rocky front of the plateau above the sea, on which the house stood, faced due south, and was so protected from other points by an amphitheatre of hills, that almost anything which grows on the Riviera could be made to flourish there in the open air. It was laid out in the Italian style, with paths and terraces, and stairways hewn out of the rock, and its ledges and crevices had been filled with semi-tropical shrubs and flowers, regardless of expense.

This garden was Grace Lorraine's greatest joy, and Roger Wynyard's failure to appreciate it was a cardinal sin in her eyes. He tried hard to understand it on this July evening, but it was of no use. Grace was worried over the futility of the country gentleman's existence.

The best, like Roger's uncle, took a sympathetic interest in their tenants, but few of them, if they were living on their estates, did anything except enjoy themselves, whether their enjoyment took the form of sport or gardening or breeding prize animals. Most of them, in the days before the war, apart from their pleasures, were content to keep themselves, like their horses, in what they called "condition."

She liked them extremely to meet at social functions. They were brave and charming, and, if they were unmarried, reckoned up all the advantages she offered as a wife. But not one of them had ever entered the door of the Via Pacis Fellowship, which represented the solitary attempt to bring this huge peninsula of Devon into touch with the work of the world.

They were drones, and Roger in a way was the worst of them, because the others had the welfare of their estates to look after—if they did look after it—whereas he lived the life which they did, without having anything to look after.

But he had her affection because they had been brought up together since they were children, and he had the most charming disposition of any man she had ever met. For he was generosity and chivalry personified, and had not one trace of "swank," though his cricket had made him the idol of Rugby and Oxford, and he was the favourite nephew of the local Earl.

Grace, in her way, was his opposite. For though the County considered her arrogant because she insisted on living her life in her own way, instead of theirs, and refused offers of marriage from the most eligible men on the mere ground that she could not love them, the beautiful heiress of Via Pacis spent her days with the members of the Fellowship and their families exactly as if she were one of themselves. She craved for companionship in her studies, and intellectual society, and recognized that the Arts are a republic in which only success and genius count.

CHAPTER II

HOW THE ABBEY OF VIA PACIS WAS BESTOWED ON THE LORRAINES BY KING HENRY VIII

THE monastery and lands of Via Pacis had been the property of the Lorraines for nearly four hundred years. The first of the family to own them was Jean-Baptiste de Lorraine, a Gentleman of the Bedchamber, who came over in the suite of Catherine of Aragon, and was dismissed by her on account of his fondness for the society of Colet and Erasmus, and other students of the New Learning, who were far more closely associated in her eyes with the spread of anti-papal ideas than the revival of the ancient Greek language. King Henry, the finest royal scholar of his age, sympathized with him, and gave him a post in his own household, so that they might study together, which they did with great profit, Jean-Baptiste acquainting the King with the latest discoveries of the New Learning, and keeping a kind of register of them, which is among the most treasured possessions of the library at Windsor Castle.

When King Henry suppressed the monasteries, and distributed their wealth, he did not forget the discharged Gentleman of his wife's Bedchamber, who had suffered for his learning, but gave him the ruins and the revenues of the great Abbey of Via Pacis. Furthermore, when Jean-Baptiste de Lorraine took himself a wife, who in good time bore him a son, King Henry became its godfather, from which time every eldest son of the Lorraines had always been given the name of Henry at his baptism.

The Henry Lorraine who, at the age of thirty, succeeded to the property in the eighties, a great student and an accomplished man, had been a frequent visitor to Italy, where public institutions of all kinds are housed in expropriated monasteries, and because he hated the thought of such a splendid tract of Devonshire serving no useful purpose, conceived the idea of restoring the monastery of Via Pacis, and making it the seat of an institution which should be of great benefit to the public, and cause posterity to remember the Lorraines, when their name was lost from the lands, with his death and the marriage of his daughter.

CHAPTER III

HOW HENRY LORRAINE XIII. TURNED THE MONASTERY OF VIA PACIS INTO A COLLEGE FOR POOR AUTHORS, ARTISTS AND MUSICIANS

HE plunged into the scheme with characteristic avidity. He called in the architect of a west-country cathedral, as likely to be acquainted with monastic buildings ; he wished to combine modern conditions with as little violence as possible to ancient appearances, and he wished to restore faithfully such parts of the great Abbey as were capable of restoration.

On the day when the architect arrived, the Lorraines—Georgia Lorraine was then alive—and the Rector made a tour of the ruins with him. They began with the Great Court, which still had the greater part of its colonnade standing, and the monks' houses behind it fairly perfect, except for minor defects.

“ Dear me, how very fine ! ” said the architect, when they went into some of the forty monks' houses, which each had two bedrooms above, and a study or sitting-room and a kitchen below. “ What exactly are you going to do with it, Mr. Lorraine ? ”

“ Make it habitable as a home for professional people who have lost their money.”

“ What other accommodation have you besides these houses, or cells, which might be made habitable ? ”

“ Roughly speaking, the Chapter-House, the Refectory, the monastery kitchen, and other servants' offices, and parts of the Abbot's Lodging.”

"And what shall you do with them?"

"Turn the Refectory into a common dining-room, and the Chapter-House into a library and club-room. What remains of the Abbot's Lodging I shall turn into a residence for the Master, and a residence and an office for the steward."

"What will the Master's duties be?"

"Practically nil, except to see that the steward carries out his duties with a proper regard for the comfort of the inmates. The steward has the largest responsibilities, because he has to provide for their feeding, lighting and warming."

"How many inmates do you propose to have in your endowment, Mr. Lorraine?"

"Forty, I suppose—that is the number of the monks' houses," he replied.

But his wife was up in arms.

"Are you going to run it on the lines of a workhouse," she inquired, "with the separation of married couples for your first condition?"

She asked it with fine indignation, and indignation was natural to Mrs. Lorraine, an American with severe beauty and a deep blue eye.

"Instead of forty widows and widowers and separate houses, each with one bedroom and one bathroom and one sitting-room and one kitchen, why not have twenty and allow each person to have a husband or wife or child with them? I don't think that is quite grammar, only I'm trying to talk sense, not grammar—and have a bathroom, three bedrooms, two sitting-rooms, and turn one kitchen into a pantry, really giving them some of the accommodation which they were accustomed to before they lost their money? I've lost the thread of my sentence now, but you know what I mean."

"They won't want their kitchen and pantry much," said the architect. "I understand that they're going to have their food in the Refectory?"

"Never mind—they would not feel happy without them."

"How *are* they going to be charged for their food?"

asked the architect pertinently. "That will be a very important matter, whether you have twenty pensioners with relatives, or forty without. Will they pay a fixed rate per day, or just be charged for what they have?"

"I am going to pay for everything—food, lighting, heating and service. They will have no expenses whatever, and will receive a small annual stipend to keep themselves in clothes, and other necessaries."

"It is the most generous thing I ever heard of!" said the architect. "Have you calculated the expense?"

"I have, and when I have paid for the restoration, equipment and furnishing of the buildings, I am going to hand over to trustees a sufficient amount of securities to produce the sum which will be required for their annual maintenance—merely reserving to myself the permanent right to appoint the Master, steward and beneficiaries of the College of the Fellowship of Via Pacis."

"This will take a very large sum, Mr. Lorraine."

"More than half my income, I anticipate, but I shall still have more than I require."

"That's your own affair, and it is princely munificence. Shall we see what has to be done?"

"I can tell you that in a very few words. I want the outward semblance, and as far as possible the interior also preserved unchanged, but I want each house to have its bathroom, and each room to have its radiator, skilfully concealed behind some appropriate decoration. I shall have furniture designed by an expert from the South Kensington Museum, as much in keeping with the period as possible, and shall call for tenders from leading London firms for carrying it out to his satisfaction."

"I can see to that, and as you are giving such a large order, it may not perhaps cost greatly more than buying the furniture ready-made."

"Are you going to let me have my way, and have each pair of houses knocked into one?" asked beautiful Mrs. Lorraine of her husband.

"What do you think, Mr. Crocket?" he asked the architect.

"Well, I'm against it—it will alter the character of the building, and give an immense deal of extra work. We are dealing with very thick masonry."

"Yes, but if you are going to give up half your income to establish this college of Via Pacis, it is worth while to do it right, and if you keep the houses separated as they are, they will only contain one bedroom, a bathroom, a living-room and a kitchen each, which will be a very tight squeeze for a married couple, and an impossibility for a parent and child of opposite sexes," urged Mrs. Lorraine.

"You can turn the kitchens into bedrooms if they are not going to be used," suggested the architect.

"That will alter the little houses a great deal more than putting a door between each pair," persisted Mrs. Lorraine, who, like many Americans, had the reformer's zeal. "Besides, each house will want a room for keeping buckets and brooms and other cleaning implements."

"That won't form any difficulty," answered her husband, "because my guests won't do the heavy cleaning themselves. I shall have a staff connected with the steward's department to do that."

"Well, what are we to do, Mr. Lorraine?" asked the architect. The domestic comfort of the inmates seemed a small matter to him compared with maintaining the monastic character of the little monks' houses.

"Georgie shall decide," replied the Squire.

"I see only one way of deciding," said Mrs. Lorraine. "Dad and mumsy are just the sort of people whom you would have into Via Pacis College, and I know what it would mean to them if you kept men and women separate, like monks and nuns; they wouldn't be much longer for this world if they were long in the college."

"That settles it," said Mr. Lorraine. "We are going to have a monastery in which the inmates bid good-bye not to the natural emotions, but only to the cares of the world. Our motto will be plain living, but poetical surroundings, which will lead, we hope, to study, philosophy, and Art—Art being the creation of objects of beauty, in writing, painting, sculpture, or music. I shall choose the inmates of Via Pacis mostly from artists, writers

and musicians, so that it shall be a little colony of people with creative instincts, settled in the midst of the natural and historical inspirations of Devonshire, a club of congenial spirits, like the artists of Newlyn, forming a pleasant world for ourselves and the Wynyards to live in.

“ And I shall provide a library of ten thousand books, including all I can think of which will stimulate the creativeness of the Fellowship of Via Pacis, when it is formed.”

CHAPTER IV

TWENTY-FOUR YEARS LATER—THE COLLEGE OF VIA PACIS

AT the time that this narrative commences, the Fellowship of Via Pacis—or, as it had come to be called, the Via Pacis School—was known to authors and artists all over the Anglo-Saxon world.

At the moment it consisted of four authoresses, two authors, two actors, four men composers, a lady composer, four painters, a sculptor and two friends of Mr. Lorraine who had no special qualifications.

It had been going for twenty-four years, and had amply justified its existence, for besides the twenty Fellows living in the monastery, and drawing their pensions, there were a dozen others who had made successes, and now had houses or summer bungalows on the estate, and a score or two more in London.

The most important section of the School lived outside of the monastery walls, because no one who had attained sufficient success to pay income-tax could remain a member of the Fellowship. The salaries of both Master and steward were well below the income-tax level. The free board and housing, the stipend of a pound a week, meant the liberty to create for those who had failed in the struggle to make a living, and those who were beginning the struggle without means, and had to be financed until they could win a stipend from such a hard task-mistress as Art, just as an Oxford Fellowship has enabled many a Judge to start at the Bar.

All who had been members of the Fellowship were

still free to use the Club-room library, with its thousands of books. It served as a link between those who had sprung from Via Pacis, and those who were still beholden to it.

The Monastery had grown into a place of such beauty that it was a pilgrimage spot for all who came to South Devon. The vast court, surrounded by deep red sandstone colonnades, very ancient and weather-worn, was filled with an old-fashioned monastery garden of paved paths, plots of aromatic herbs, and tall herbaceous plants, faithfully copied from an Italian prototype.

A translation of the old Latin name of the Abbey, *The Way of Peace*, was carved on the restored entrance-tower, which admitted to the outer or Abbot's Court, two sides of which were occupied by the Abbot's Lodging, the Refectory and the Chapter-House, beautiful medieval buildings; its centre being filled by a lawn of fine old turf, divided into four by stone paths, leading up to a sundial. An archway opposite to the entrance-tower led from the Abbot's Court to the Great Court. Apart from the Monastery garden, it was like an Oxford College.

The entrance which had once led from the Great Court to the Abbey Church and the cloisters, now led to the gardens laid out among their ruins with such exquisite beauty. In the centre of the nave and each of its aisles, in the centre of the choir and each of its aisles, and in the centre of each transept, there was a flagged path, but the rest of the groundwork of the church was filled in with a carpet of flowers, partly in herbaceous borders, running up to the portions of the walls which still rose to some height above the ground, and partly spread over rude pyramids of fallen masonry. Some of the windows kept their arches and their tracery well; others were torn into gaps.

The ferns and flowers which love such places were encouraged to wave from every bend in the tracery and crevice in the wall. Only ivy, the common foe of ancient masonry and rock plants, was jealously rooted out.

In the ruined cloister the garth was filled with smooth turf, and the cloister walk still covered with its own flags.

Each little house had its own garden, as in the days of the monks.

Words can express but baldly the atmosphere of perfect peace given to the ancient ruins by the masses of foliage and blossom, blended by Nature and kept in perfection by care, which swathed their bases, and filled their hollows. It was difficult to believe that any rock-garden could be more wonderful or beautiful, even under Italian skies.

Beyond lay the grounds of the Manor House, with lawns for tennis and croquet laid out in them, and woods, and a mountain river running through a little Japanese landscape garden.

The writers and artists, some of them, devoted themselves to purely imaginary work, but the bulk of them sought their inspiration at Seacombe. And some of them had been not a little successful. In order not to depart from their inspiration as their financial position improved, they built houses for themselves on choice sites on the wooded cliffs above the inlet, and continued to haunt Via Pacis. Some of them had had houses of their own long enough to have reared families well on their way to manhood and womanhood and marriage, so that Roger, the Rector's grandson, and Grace, the Squire's daughter, had not wanted for young society in that isolated Devonshire village.

Grace's mother had been dead for many a long day, and the Squire was a man of over sixty. The Rector was nearly ten years older, and the Rector's daughter-in-law, Lady Cynthia Wynyard, might have been excused if she had grown exercised over Roger's future, since Roger, after captaining the Rugby and Oxford Elevens, and being a little god at school and college, had shown no signs of being fit for any career which would make his living. He might, of course, become a soldier like his father, and he might, of course, with his athletic record, become a schoolmaster, but that meant independence in neither means nor liberty. He was waiting, in the English fashion, amid the admiration of his neighbours, for something to turn up.

Grace, Mr. Lorraine's only child, was even more beau-

tiful than her mother had been ; her features were more delicately-cut ; she was taller, and had much dignity in her slender figure. She, too, was brilliant at games, and public opinion was sure that two persons, so meant for each other, who, when both were at home, had seen each other almost daily since childhood, would make a match of it. It would be natural for such a high-spirited girl to marry a man who had proved his mastery in sport.

CHAPTER V

INTRODUCING HESTIA MYRTLE

THE Manor House of Via Pacis, which adjoins and derives its name from the monastery, is a stately, seventeenth-century house, of red brick, dressed with yellow stone, standing near the mouth of the great Seacombe inlet, and visible from the sea.

It is divided from the fishing village of Seacombe by a crescent of wooded cliffs, with sand below and, until the recent building extensions, an old apple-orchard above, half a mile long.

The Lorraines were at home to the present and past members of the Fellowship every Sunday afternoon when they were at Via Pacis, and the past members used the club-room of the Fellowship, into which Mr. Lorraine had converted the Chapter-House of the Abbey, a very great deal, with the result that something like a School of Art, Music and Authorship had grown up in this South Devon paradise.

The painters chose their subjects largely from the wooded shores of the great Seacombe inlet, or the fine seas beating on the mighty twin capes which guarded its entrance, or the wide sweep of moorland above. The authors made Devonshire antiquities and history their study, or the backgrounds of their novels. The composers had some of them visions of making Via Pacis a Bayreuth or an Oberammergau. But Hestia Myrtle, the lady composer, was an exception. Like Dal Dryander, the most prosperous of the ex-Fellows, who kept up their

connection with the place, she looked to musical-comedy, revues, and popular songs to make her fortune. But unlike Mr. Dryander, she had been unable to sell any of her music, beyond a few songs, for which she received very little.

She was not greatly afflicted by it. The monastery of Via Pacis, where she lived in comfort, without any pecuniary cares, was a haven of rest after her hand-to-mouth struggles in Chelsea, and she was popular, not only with her old friend Mr. Sylvester and the past and present members of the Fellowship, but with the Lorraines themselves, and at the Rectory, where the grandson, Roger Wynyard, had just left Oxford.

Hestia, who was a few years his senior, was a lovely creature, so slender and lissom that in spite of her hard ships in London she still looked a girl.

From her Greek mother—her father, a British Naval officer, had married in the Ionian Islands—she inherited the grace and the features of a Greek statue, and her father's healthy northern blood had filled her clear cheeks with a rich damask, and given her the iron-grey eyes one finds in those who, like Sicilians, have both Greek and Norman ancestry. She dressed her wavy black hair like Peitho's on the frieze of the Parthenon, in a Greek chignon, with a fillet of thin gold leaves, which had belonged to her mother, to divide the front from the back. But she did not try and dress like a statue. She spent all her income, and all she could earn, in trying to look as dainty as Grace Lorraine.

Hers was a profession which is not "hard on" clothes. When she came back from a function at the Manor House there was no need for her to go and change into a tea gown before she sat down to her piano. Indeed, she never did sit down to the piano without being becomingly dressed. She liked to look a picture when she was working. Frank Dicksee, not Bach, was her ideal in *Harmony*.

She was not encouraged at the Rectory so much as she was at the Manor House and the Grange. It was not that Roger's mother—the Rector's daughter-in-law—considered her a child of Belial. Lady Cynthia, being accustomed to a

society very different from what she found at *Via Pacis*, was glad of the company of anything so pretty and lively. But she did not care to expose Roger, whom Mr. Lorraine wished his daughter to marry, to the temptations of opportunity. She was therefore very friendly to Hestia when they met on neutral ground, but did not encourage her presence at the Rectory.

Outside the house Hestia was not a danger, since Roger showed so marked a preference for the society of Grace Lorraine.

If Grace was not to marry for a title, these two seemed made for each other. The heiress could afford to marry for love, nor could Roger, who would be comfortably off some day, and on his mother's side came of the best blood in the County, be called an ineligible.

Yet better matches from the social point of view had often presented themselves to Grace. The young Lord Dartmoor, who seemed to own half Devon, was a declared candidate. However, Grace, though she would not pledge herself to Roger, showed him decidedly more favour than the others.

Roger, a splendid six-footer, was the fine flower of our Public-School system. For he was utterly unspoiled by his Rugby and Oxford fame and popularity, and the Public-School code of honour working on his generous disposition had made him as chivalrous as a Bayard, while the gay insouciance which had given him such nerve at cricket kept him a schoolboy at heart, though he had left Oxford, and would soon be called to the Bar, if he remained in London long enough to "eat his dinners" at the Inner Temple.

Roger had no love for London; he preferred to live in his native county, dividing his time between sport and Grace Lorraine. His people had no objection. While his grandfather was alive, Roger's private income of three hundred a year made him very comfortable, and when his grandfather died it would be increased to more than a thousand, with the prospect of a further considerable increase if he survived his mother.

A young man in Roger's position was apt to marry a girl

with equal prospects, and go through life without working for his living, as a country gentleman. And considering Mr. Lorraine's attitude, it would be an imprudence for him to leave the field open by his absence.

It was not Roger who looked at matters in this light, but his mother, Lady Cynthia. His father, who had died when Roger was an infant, had made such a match with her, so she encouraged Roger in his inclinations, and he was very much looked-up-to by the County.

The only person who blamed him for doing nothing was Grace Lorraine, who was sensitive to the influences of her environment. As long as ever she could remember she had been in almost daily contact with the members of the Fellowship of *Via Pacis*. As a child she had played with their children ; as a woman she had always had for her nearest neighbours authors, artists and composers working to make their names, and with their wits and energies sharpened by meeting each other at every meal. She herself painted quite fairly. She had tried her hand at various forms of writing, and though she had not attempted to compose, she was an accomplished musician.

The achievements of the past and present members of the Fellowship were her father's constant joy and boast, because he had founded it, and the fame of *Via Pacis* was gradually becoming known to all workers in the Arts.

CHAPTER VI

INTRODUCING THE FELLOWS OF VIA PACIS

EARLY in July, 1914, the Lorraines were giving their first garden-party of the summer for the members of the Via Pacis Guild, and the friends who came to Seacombe year after year, attracted by its delightful scenery and the society of so many authors, artists and musicians.

This was no common occasion. Mr. Pennylegion, the young sculptor who, inspired by the numerous fragments of medieval sculpture lying about, had made the restoration of Via Pacis his speciality, had been obliged to resign his apartment in Via Pacis because he had attained the enviable notoriety of paying income-tax.

To show his gratitude to Via Pacis, he had carved a well-head of dark red sandstone, which Mr. Lorraine placed in the centre of the great court, to match the arches of the colonnade.

The chief business of the day—the drawing of water from the new well-head, and the presentation of an album to Mr. Pennylegion, was over, and the members of the Guild, past and present, were beginning to scatter about the Abbey.

The centre of the assemblage was Mr. Lorraine, now between sixty and seventy, but still slight and erect, and noticeable for his mop of white hair, and his benevolent eye. He was full of plans for the future of Via Pacis, awakened by the contemplation of the well-head. In fact, he had begun them on a very considerable scale during an

extraordinary wave of prosperity which he had gone through, and was only waiting for his speculations to take a favourable turn again to increase them greatly.

The little colony of Via Pacis was apt to sort itself into professions on occasions such as this. The literary clique was grouped round Mr. Lorraine, because he had Brooke Sylvester with him, the well-to-do bachelor author, who had helped the Lorraines to found the Fellowship of Via Pacis by choosing the first literary pensioners, and coming to live among them in the old Abbey farmhouse, called the Grange.

Grace Lorraine was very fond of the society of Mr. Sylvester, a great traveller, and the intimate friend of many celebrated people. She did not know which she enjoyed most—his collections or his conversations.

The artists were examining the well-head, making more or less demolishing remarks. Only one of them had anything to say on its behalf—Rufus How, the Master of the Fellowship.

The two actors in the Fellowship were, like the musicians, dancing attendance on Grace Lorraine, much to the annoyance of Roger Wynyard, who missed his daily singles at tennis with the heiress of Via Pacis.

One of the two, Gaston Bernafay, was the most popular person in the settlement. He had once been an Apollo, and had failed because he would take no minor part, and had never found a manager who would give him a great part in a serious play. The parts he desired were those which actor-managers reserved for themselves. Therefore as years advanced, he was glad to accept a nomination for Via Pacis.

Much absorbed in Hestia Myrtle, who was standing a little way from Grace Lorraine, was a Frenchman, who bore the ancient title of Count of Val-ê-s-Roses. Both played the piano gloriously, and could improvise brilliantly, but Miss Myrtle had only lately begun to write down her compositions, and the Count never succeeded in selling anything of his which he wrote down, probably because it lost in the process. He could certainly hold an audience spellbound.

The Count professed to nurse a hopeless passion for Miss Myrtle—"Miss Myrtle" was only the concert name of Hestia of the iron-grey eyes and rosy velvet cheeks, but nobody here knew her real name. He made grand promises to her of what he would do whenever he had any money of his own again—by this he meant when he succeeded in marrying Grace, for that was his real business at Via Pacis. The matrimonial agent whom he employed had discovered that the wealthy founder of the famous Via Pacis charity had a beautiful daughter, who would inherit all his wealth, and had made the Count of Val-êes-Roses sign a contract promising to hand over half of his first year's stipend if a nomination was secured for him. The Count assented readily—ten shillings a week and free quarters, far from the madding crowd—of creditors, were not to be sneered at, apart from the chance of the heiress, whose attractions and drawbacks could be carefully weighed while he was enjoying her father's charity.

Dal Dryander, one of the two successful composers who had worked their way to fame while pensioners at Via Pacis, and had now a bungalow on the sea-front to which he came in summer, and sometimes for a short holiday, made Hestia and the Count almost live at his bungalow—his wife liked the pair as much as he did. They were two such delightful people, so appreciative and so charmingly dressed, for to Hestia dressmaking seemed to share with flirting the distinction of being the serious business of her life, and the Count could always obtain credit for clothes.

It was a curious thing that Dal Dryander, who had more power than any man in London to give composers of light music a start, never thought of lifting his little finger to help the Count or Hestia, though he entertained them constantly.

Often, the Polyhymnia, as Mr. Sylvester, who had kept up his classics, christened the pair, went to the Manor House to dinner or for a wet afternoon, for the Lorraines were fond of music, and this incidental way for advancing his suit for Grace's hand was one which the Count naturally favoured. In France the nobleman who has

decided to marry out of his set for money makes no advances of courtship to the lady ; he merely declares himself. In England the Count knew that he would have to go further. He would have to exhibit himself in the most favourable light ; still, the advances would have to come from the lady, especially since he was her father's pensioner. Otherwise the English would consider him an adventurer.

Grace asked the Polyhymnia and Gaston Bernafay and a few others to stay to supper on that eventful night. The Wynyards had been asked, and Hestia was not slow to show her satisfaction when they met in the drawing-room before dinner, since she could only meet Roger at other people's houses. She loved a fine, athletic, dashing man, and she was young enough at heart to enjoy being "ragged" as much as Roger enjoyed ragging.

Roger's ragging was a sore point with Grace Lorraine. Perhaps because she was an only child with a pedantic parent, Grace had a marked distaste for it. Indeed, she might not have troubled with him at all, if he had not been physically her beau-ideal of a Briton, whose generous and courageous nature commanded her respect.

She compared him, to his disadvantage, with the Count, who discovered her desires, and attended to them with the intuition and tact of a poor nobleman whose marriage is his profession.

The Count perceived that she wished her admirers to model themselves on her servants, to dance attendance on her, in order to anticipate and carry out her wishes, without expecting her to do anything in return for them, except to smile her thanks. Directly they sought her favours their popularity declined. He therefore religiously abstained from advances. He had, however, one advantage over the servants ; he could pose when he was not waiting on her, whereas they had to disappear.

The pose which was most telling was that he was too poor, too ugly, too undistinguished, for any woman to look at him, while in reality he was as vain as a peacock.

It was this pose which made Grace out of generosity almost encourage him. She found him such a relief

after big, breezy Roger, who was always playing for some mark of camaraderie, if not of affection, and who committed the further *bêtise* of taking it for granted that artists, authors and musicians—the intellectuals for whom the College of Via Pacis was founded—must be as unimportant in Grace's eyes as they were in his.

It had been a growing determination with Grace to disillusionize him on this point, and she thought the day of the Pennylegion presentation a very good opportunity. So as he buzzed round her with the musicians, she only appeared to notice his presence when she asked him to perform some service for one of them.

Hestia saw quite well what she was doing. She sympathized with the object, but she also sympathized with the victim, and did her best to prevent him from feeling himself slighted.

By dinner time Roger had given up angling for Grace, and was "ragging" Hestia—ragging was Roger's form of flirting.

CHAPTER VII

ENTER ARCHITEUTHIS MONACHUS

THE night was so glorious that after dinner Mr. Bernafay and the Count, who were dancing attendance on Grace, suggested that they should go for a row, to see the moonlight at the opening of the inlet, where Tennyson wrote his "Crossing the Bar."

The Tennyson Rock was a fashion at Seacombe, like a logan-stone or a waterfall, and both Grace and Gaston Bernafay were fond of boating and good oars, though the Count was frankly a "passenger." They ran down the picturesque stairway cut in the rock to the little boat harbour, with a wall almost encircling it, where a boat was always tied up, with sufficient rope to let her rise with the tide, to take people to the little motor yacht or the two and a half ton sailing boat, anchored a few yards out so that they could be afloat at all tides. It was a very high tide, and the steps for getting into the boat were covered.

Mr. Bernafay began hauling the boat in for Grace to get on board.

"Jump in, Count," he said, "and help Miss Lorraine."

"I'd much better jump in and help him!" she said, laughing, and prepared to suit the action to the word.

"No, no, Mademoiselle, I cannot permit it!" cried the Count, stepping forward to stop her.

He could not prevent her, but he made her miscalculate her spring and jump into deep water. He screamed with alarm, and rushed to the lifebelt hanging on the rail,

"I'm all right!" she cried. "I can swim with my clothes on, but I shan't have to. I've only got to hold on to the side of the boat while Mr. Bernafay drags me in."

The steps would have been easier, but she forgot them, as they were covered by the spring tide. Bernafay sprang into the boat, and leant over its side so as to bend it towards her, and pull her in by the shoulders, but he was not so expert at this as he was at rowing or sailing, and he was fumbling, and Grace was laughing, when they heard footsteps and a loud splash.

Grace, an expert swimmer, knew to the fraction of a second the time it should have taken the diver to come up, and when he did not come up, cried, "Rope! Tie a rope round me, quick!"

Mr. Bernafay saw the situation, and lost not a second. He passed the rope under her shoulders. She knew that he could tie a knot for her to trust her life to.

"Pay out the rope until I pull," she said, "then haul me in—I can't rise without the rope; my dress will drag me down. Make the other end fast to the thwart, and sing out when you're ready."

In a flash he cried, "Ready!" and she let go of the boat and sank herself.

Seconds seemed like minutes. Would she never pull, he wondered? Was she drowned without a struggle? Had that been a pull, after all, or was it only her moving about the bottom? He was sick with anxiety.

Suddenly he felt a tug, a tug that resisted him like an anchor. "Jump in, Count, and help me!" he yelled.

"But I have this!" said the Count helplessly, meaning the life-belt.

"Drop the damned thing and help me!"

The Count turned as white as a sheet, and almost fell into the boat, but once there he pulled lustily with his foot against the thwart for purchase.

Their burden came up inch by inch. It was a terrible dead weight, for both the human beings were insensible, and it was a direct intervention of Providence that the bold diver whom Grace had sunk herself to rescue ever

came up at all, for Grace had lost the power to hold on to him when she became insensible.

Nothing could have saved him but the evil beast which had so nearly compassed his death. It gripped her with the same unrelaxing arms which had bound him, and all three were drawn up together—Grace and Roger Wynyard black in the face and enveloped in the folds of a slimy writhing black monster which looked like a devil in the dazzling moonlight.

They came up to the surface, but to haul such a dead weight over the gunwale was impossible. Their lives depended on seconds. But Mr. Bernafay did not lose his head and the cord under Grace's shoulders was close up to the iron row-lock.

“Pull double for a second!” he cried to the Count and managed to hitch the ring of rope round the row-lock before the Count gave way—by God's grace the monster was holding, not pulling.

But there was a fresh danger. The weight on the row-lock almost dragged the gunwale under water.

“Jump ashore!” he cried to the terrified Count, and loosing the end of the rope from the thwart, he passed it to him. “Make it fast,” he cried, pointing to the iron ring to which the boat was moored.

Then he jumped on the quay to make sure that the knot would stand. As he sprang, the boat swung away and tipped, and the row-lock came out. The two bodies and the monster sank like lead.

“My God, they're gone!” he cried, with sickening fear.

But the rope went taut; it held. Still he was hopeless now. With no purchase for his feet and only the Count, big fellow as he was, to help him, he could not hope to haul Grace and Roger out at all, and if they came up as easily as a fishing-float they must be dead already! And if they were not, how were he and the Count to resuscitate them? Each body would need at least two skilled men. The few moments in which everything had happened had been like an hour. It was all over now. But he pulled blindly, and with all his might, and the heavy Count tugged the rope wildly too.

Then there was a rush on the quay behind them. Strong expert hands took the rope from them, drew the bodies up, drew them to where they could be swung upon the steps, drew them in.

The body of the monster was as big as Grace, and it had arms like pythons. Two of them, three times the length of its body, were not twined round the victims, but adhering one to each of them by their extremities, and writhing the unused length between. The eight shorter arms were folded, not coiled, round the victims, folded and pressed like gigantic fingers, and were dragging them towards the terrible beak which the monster uses for tearing its prey to pieces; having two victims to assail, it had not, after the manner of its kind, used some of its arms for anchoring itself to the rock, or they never could have torn it from the bottom in time.

Even while they were pulling them on to the quay, one of the shorter arms detached itself to seek the rock, and showed on the under side of its leathery surface toothed suckers, each like the maw of a baby monster, an inch across.

"Cut these arms away for your lives, men!" cried Dr. Humphrey. "There is not a second to lose in resuscitating them."

"They'll be dead first," said the coxswain of the life-boat, with fierce decision. "Stand clear."

The men, accustomed to obey him, leaped aside. His long knife flashed from his hip, and he plunged his hands in towards that terrible beak, drawing the knife through the monster's brain quite easily. Its vile head, with its gigantic staring eyes, collapsed, and its arms shivered and stiffened, and fell off the two bodies, which the old doctor, without waiting a fraction of a second, laid right for the water to run out of the lungs. And then artificial respiration began, with two lifeboat-men working at each, and the doctor with his ripe experience to guide them.

The doctor did not so much as look at the dead monster, though it was the first time that one had ever been brought into his ken. Nor did the men who were helping him.

Life and death were in their hands. But the men, who were standing by, crowded round it, and asked questions of the grim old coxswain.

There was nothing which they could do for Roger and Grace, until it was their turn to relieve the others. The Count was with them, scared out of his life, but asking more questions than any of them.

Mr. Bernafay had hardly looked at it. He seemed to think that if his attention relaxed from his friends, their chance of life would lessen. He stood by Hestia.

It was Hestia Myrtle, the composer, who had saved them. Love lent her wings. She had a soft corner in her heart for all nice men, and Roger she adored for his splendid manhood. She was ready to give herself to him body and soul if he but lifted his little finger, and she had been sitting with him on a seat half-way down the cliffs, promising herself a golden hour as soon as the boat had shot away from the steps, when they saw the accident happen.

She saw Roger dash down the steps and dive in. He did not come up automatically. She, too, knew that something grave must have happened, and flew back to the garden, where she had seen Dr. Humphrey, the kindly old man who had attended to the mortal ills of Seacombe for nearly half a century, serving out a glass of grog and tobacco to the crew of the lifeboat. The Pennylegion reception was followed in the evening by a sort of fête for the townspeople—the local band and Japanese lanterns—to which the lifeboat-men were, as usual, invited.

“Will they live?” gasped Hestia to Dr. Humphrey. He had to leave the work of the artificial respiration to the lifeboat-men; he had trained them to it, and the fatigue was too great for his age.

He said “yes” to encourage the workers. But he had small hope himself. They had been in the water too long, especially Roger.

The men who were helping the doctor to resuscitate the bodies were appalled by the colour of their hands and faces, and drew his attention to it. Being a scientific man, he knew the cause, though he had never seen it in operation before.

"It's a calamary," he said, "and that black's the ink with which he hides himself, like the squids you use for bait. He is a kind of giant squid himself."

They knew about squid's ink, and were satisfied. They had no time for questions, but the others, who were standing round their coxswain, were gaping with questions.

"It's moonlight," he was saying, "and you can't see it, but if it was day you'd find that one of that size had filled the whole boat-harbour with his ink, and yards and yards outside it."

"Squid, did you say it was, Josiah?"

"Devil-fish, and I have seen bigger—two or three times bigger—on the banks of Newfoundland, where I 'spect this one come from. You find 'em floating on the banks in hot weather, but they live in caves under the sea, or holes in the reefs, like you get under the Giant's Head."

"And what be all they little mouths he's gotten on his arms, Josiah?"

"Suckers, and it's right lucky that they two"—he pointed with his eyes to Roger and Grace—"had their clothes on, and weren't for bathing. For they suckers burrow right into naked flesh.* I have seen a drowned man who was taken from one of them, and I'll tell you summat, Ben—if you mates had cut his arms off, as you started in to, you might 'a' had to drag the suckers out one by one. They as know 'em best 'as told me that the only thing to make 'em loose everything altogether is to do as I did, and pass a sharp knife through their brain—or bite it."

"Does he do much with that bill o' his, Josiah?"

"Tears you like an eagle—not as I've ever seen one—I mean an eagle."

"And how did he get here, do you reckon?"

"Common off Norway, in summer, and a good few of 'em off the west coast of Ireland. These big ones only come up in the summer—'s said for the rest of the year they keep in their holes in deep water, just fishing with those long arms o' theirn. I met a man once who'd seen

* This is not a fact.

the dead body of one eighty feet long—the body, mind ye, not the arms. That was out Newfoundland way, too. But I've never seen one above fifteen or twenty feet in the body, when I was cod-fishing on they banks, for a good part of my life."

"And what kills 'em, Josiah? Did you ever hear tell of that?"

"Nobbut the sea-sarpint, which is a mortal big conger, as I've heerd tell, and it's our congers as go for the smaller ones in these seas. I've caught conger with a devil-fish's arm almost as big as 'emselves inside 'em."

"Four more men, please!" said the doctor's voice, and they all started forward to offer themselves, leaving the Count as the coxswain's sole auditor.

While the lifeboat-men were handling the bodies on the old method, which was still in vogue in that remote part, Hestia stood watching. She did not utter a sound, but her nails were cutting deeply into the palms of her hands, as she watched the sharp fight with death, and when her anxiety grew beyond bounds she gripped Mr. Bernafay's arm convulsively.

When the bodies were pulled out of the water, the lifeboat-men, who had handled many a half-drowned man, after turning them face downwards, to let the clogging water run out, swiftly turned them over again on their backs.

While they were doing this, the little old doctor was taking out his pocket-book. How could he find time for such a thing at such a moment? Hestia wondered. But he only opened it to take from the pocket, where they reposed with other things which are needed in such a terrible hurry when you do need them, two rubber bands, with which almost instantaneously he fastened the tongues forward. Sitting astride each body a stalwart lifeboat-man seized the victims' arms below the elbows, and extended them above their heads and counted "one, two, three," slowly, then drew down the arms again, and pressed them tightly into the sides, again counting "one, two, three," slowly. Each pumping up and down took only four seconds, though it seemed so slow.

After a while, short, though it seemed so long, Hestia could see them change their time, and a change come into the little doctor's eyes, for it meant that the operators were detecting a little effort of breathing in the bodies, and were timing their efforts to it. No one but an expert knows how exactly the two must synchronize.

At once the little doctor was down on his knees, with his stethoscope, beside the gaunt, drenched figures, which half an hour before had been like a Helen and an Apollo in their beauty. With Grace he was soon satisfied ; with Roger it was a long minute before he turned to the anxious woman beside him.

"They must be alive," he said, "for I can still hear their hearts beating. It's as faint as the footstep of a gnat, but it's there."

"Thank God ! Thank God !" cried Hestia, sinking to her knees beside Roger.

At last Grace opened her eyes. Why did not Roger open his eyes ? Hestia asked of Heaven, under her breath. If he was alive, would he not open his eyes like Grace ? He must have slipped back into Eternity.

The men kept on. She dreaded lest they were keeping on after life was extinct, so as to give him every chance when every chance was gone. But at length, he, too, opened his eyes, and turned them on her. There was no sight in them. He did not know that she was Hestia. He did not even know that it was a woman kneeling beside him, watching him and adjuring the Deity.

The time occupied by the artifical respiration process was terrifying to Hestia. Relays of workers—fortunately there were relays, because eight or ten men had been with the doctor when he was summoned—seemed to be working for hours. It was, by the watch, more than an hour before their labours had been sufficiently successful for the patients to be moved into the house. It was not until they would soon be in a condition to be moved that any word of what was going on had reached Mr. Lorraine and his guests. A separate stall had been arranged for the lifeboat-men's grog, which no one else was taking, so they were isolated when Hestia ran up to Dr. Humphrey ;

and they had worked so long with him that he had only to sign to them to follow him.

The servant in charge of the grog was not concerned about their sudden departure. She supposed that the volatile Hestia had some pleasant surprise or new form of entertainment for them.

So completely had everyone been kept in the dark that Mr. Lorraine almost fainted when a lifeboat-man tramped up to him, and asked for hot blankets and hot milk to be prepared, because two people had been almost drowned.

"Who?" he exclaimed, in a fever of anxiety—"my daughter?"

"Yes, Miss Grace, and Mr. Roger, sir. They're all right now, when they've had a good night's rest."

"Why did I not hear about it till now?" Mr. Lorraine asked, in a tone very unusual for him.

"Dr. Humphrey did not send me, sir."

The little doctor knew that it was kinder not to send, until Grace and Roger were definitely alive or definitely dead.

But when they had been rolled in the hot blankets and put to bed, with hot water bottles at their feet, and with two lifeboat-men giving them hot milk, a little at a time, to drink, their relatives were admitted, but not to speak.

The doctor himself stayed until they had passed into a heavy and prolonged natural sleep, which lasted until the middle of the next day.

When they woke again, apart from the slight cough, left by water hanging about the lungs, and a little giddiness, which gradually passed off, they were practically themselves again, with no traces of the accident except the painful memory.

Neither Mr. Lorraine nor any of his guests who saw it would ever forget that terrifying spectacle when the last heirs of the Lorraines and the Wynyards were carried by the lifeboat-men on shutters as if they were dead, through the white glare of the moonlight into the great portal of the darkened Manor House.

CHAPTER VIII

THE HOUSE OF CARDS

THE fateful night had passed. Hestia Myrtle, like Roger's mother, had not been to bed at all, but had been passing from room to room, watching them both, with Lady Cynthia, for Roger's sake.

But it was not until afternoon tea-time, when she had left them and they were down in the dining-room, and were feeling not much the worse for the shock, that Grace and Roger learned from the doctor, who had come in to report on them and take a cup of tea, how much they owed to her.

"We must go and hunt her up to thank her, Roger," said Grace, the moment they had finished a meal whose heartiness reassured Dr. Humphrey.

Hestia was in the room where she did her composing in her monk's house on the west side of the great court. The colour scheme of her cushions and her curtains gave the room beauty, in spite of the uncostliness of the materials, and they were her proper *milieu*.

A woman's eye told Grace this at a glance, as Hestia lay stretched on a couch in a Greek *chiton*, made of fine white linen, with a flame-coloured border, and slender sandals, copied from a Muse's in the Vatican, which betrayed the gleaming whiteness of her feet. Their arrival had awakened her; people did not often go through the ceremony of ringing at Via Pacis; they passed in and knocked at the sitting-room doors.

"Come in," droned Hestia, in a tired voice.

She did not show her tiredness until they noted the blue rims under her eyes, for the warmth of sleep had restored to her clear dark cheeks the lovely crimson which damasked them.

"Well, Hestia," they began—both of them called her Hestia, though she was some years older than Roger, and at least an additional couple of years older than Grace; "we've come to thank you for saving our lives."

"I didn't save them," said Hestia. "I wish I had."

"You did—it was your bringing the lifeboat-men that did it."

"Well, I couldn't do less."

"It's a good job that you didn't!" said Roger grimly.

"I hope that you have not saved us to your own undoing—you know the old proverb!" said Grace.

"How could it be anything but good luck for me that you were not killed?"

"I think that the proverb has something to do with Fate resenting interference, and inflicting vengeance on the offender."

"Oh, don't," said Hestia. "I shall always be looking out for a fair woman and a dark man when I'm telling my fortune on the cards."

"Come in and dine with us, and tell all our fortunes this evening, Hestia. Dad wants to pour out his gratitude."

"Yes, I'll come. I love champagne, and your father said he'd never have his dinner without opening champagne when I was present."

"I won't let him forget," said Grace, in high good humour.

"And come in that ancient Greek robe," Grace had said. "Dad is your devoted slave already, but this will put the lid on, as Roger would say."

It was not without design that she introduced Roger's name. She wished Hestia to know that she approved of her camaraderie with Roger. It was camaraderie, not love, which she herself desired from Roger, and Hestia was a valuable pawn in the game.

She knew that she could afford not to be jealous—that Roger's heart was hers, that she had but to hold out her finger for the falcon to come back to her wrist. It was she who had drawn Roger's attention to the way in which the border of the *chiton*, halfway between gold and rose, heightened Hestia's attractions. She knew how Hestia would look at the piano, with the soft light of wax candles silhouetting her against the darkness. She smiled indulgently.

Mr. Lorraine was in his gayest spirits. He liked music, and he liked the society of a charming woman. But he never invited Hestia Myrtle to the house himself, unless there were several guests. He thought that he might lay himself open to aspersions which would be undignified, and inspire Grace with the dread of a stepmother.

When Grace invited her, which she often did, the position was different, and cordiality was politeness.

He met Hestia in the rock-garden, which had once been a stately Abbey church. She had just come into it through the postern door on the north side, used by the monks when they came into the church from their cells at night, or in bad weather. The north transept was the most perfect part of the ruin. The walls were high enough for the window arches to be intact, and most of the tracery remained, lovingly garnished by Nature with a wealth of snapdragons and flowering capers and the small ferns which root themselves in mortar and defy the sun. The fallen stones heaped against the walls were filled with rich tufts of Mediterranean flowers.

She was contemplating them with delight. Before she found her haven of rest at Via Pacis, Hestia Myrtle, to get away from a man in Chelsea, had spent some months with Mr. Sylvester and his niece, in wandering from one "promised land" to another in Italy, and Hestia had only too vivid a remembrance of the effects, if not the names, of its wild flowers.

"I can never thank you enough for bringing Italy to Devonshire!" she said. "It has doubled the gift you made in establishing me here."

"It is nothing to what I intend to do, when the invest-

ments which I have made have had time to fructify. May I tell you how beautiful you look in that *chiton*, Hestia?"

"Of course you may—anyone may tell me nice things."

Hestia had never enjoyed the luxury of a dinner at the Manor House more. The room, the shining plate and glass, the fine napery, the well-trained men-servants, the dainty food, the flowing champagne, all filled her with a sense of well-being. And as everyone in the room felt that her presence of mind had saved the lives of Grace and Roger, she enjoyed a banquet of gratitude and sympathy also.

She looked really beautiful, as she advanced to the piano when they had taken their coffee in the drawing-room, to play herself into the emotional fever which set her powers in motion for telling fortunes.

Grace lit the wax candles at the piano—they would not be needed for another half-hour, or maybe an hour, but there must be nothing to break the spell when Hestia had started.

There she sat, playing without music anything which appealed to her mood, from Schumann to fragments of musical comedy, passing to compositions and improvisations of her own, as she warmed to her task.

The music was lost on Roger, and, except for its sensuousness, on Mr. Lorraine. But they were none the less filled with pleasure. It was such a joy to let their eyes dwell on the waving black hair, in its ancient Greek coiffure; the light profile, suggestive of swift decision, and sympathies as swift, when the smile showed the even ring of small, shiny teeth; the soft, crimson mouth, and the noble curve of the chin, as she played with the notes. She had a caressing and extremely graceful way of laying her hands on them, and the grace seemed to be communicated to her whole body. Her arms, bare to the shoulder-brooches, were as white and perfect as a statue's.

How often would Roger and the Lorraines in the dark months before them recall that exquisite Greek figure, silhouetted by the soft wax-candle-light against the fine Stuart furnishings of that noble Stuart chamber.

Every now and then, when she had finished a piece, she turned round to comment on it, in a low voice, full of *simpatica*.

Neither Roger nor Mr. Lorraine knew exactly what she was talking about, but they liked the way she said it. Grace was a good musician, though she was incapable of creative work herself.

While Hestia sat and played, growing lovelier and lovelier with excitement, Roger was guilty of meditation—an infrequent crime with him. Why did he not propose to Hestia? He knew what an adorable lover she was, for she had let him make love to her, and if she was not as beautiful as Grace, there were moments when, as now, she was lovely and Sapphic as Grace never allowed herself to be. That Hestia would marry him he felt sure; she never said him nay seriously. He was equally sure that Grace would only feel relieved if he dropped the subject of marriage, and was content with her friendship. Why should he go on kicking against the pricks?

But as he was thinking these thoughts, his eye chanced to fall on Grace. She had been feeling the music intensely, and it had set her thinking of the uncompleted tragedy of yesterday, when Roger, the greatest friend she had ever had, that superb specimen of manhood, so fearless and so chivalrous, who would be one of the phalanx of Epaminondas if his country should ever need a levee of her sons for war, so nearly died a nameless death. It was nothing that she did not need his help. It counted in his favour that she had so nearly to lose her life in saving his; that he would have been dead now if it had not been for her courage and tenacity. She had never felt so nearly able to say yes to the suit which was always on the tip of Roger's tongue.

When Roger's glance fell on her, her eye met his, and he saw a new Grace, whom he had never met before, so like a lover that the image of Hestia faded from his heart, and he determined once more to put his fortunes to the test.

Some subconsciousness that she was entering a new domain may have prompted Grace to get up and ask Hestia at the conclusion of the part of Rosamunde which she was

playing, whether she had played herself sufficiently into the mood.

Hestia nodded, and came down the room with an Eastern subtlety of movement, which went as well with the fortuneteller as the Greek coiffure and the clear, iron-grey eyes under the unbroken line of the eyebrows.

A new pack of cards was lying on a small square table, with an ample green cloth. Hestia broke the paper round them, and sorted out the twos, threes, fours, fives and sixes.

"I could have given you a bezique pack," said Grace, "if I had known you were going to sort the other cards out."

"Whose fortune shall I tell first?" asked Hestia.

"Your own, to see if you're going to suffer by saving our lives!" cried Grace and Roger simultaneously.

"It's rather unlucky to tell one's own fortune, so you must shuffle and cut them for me."

Grace shuffled them with such ease and rapidity that Hestia said, "I could tell that you're a bridge-player without any fortune-telling. Cut them into three packs, please, towards me."

Grace did, and Hestia turned them face upwards, and began dealing them out in threes, taking the highest card of each—or, where they were all three of the same suit, she took all three of them—and began arranging them in a horseshoe.

The first card which turned up was the Queen of Spades.

"That's me, of course, and bang at the end of the horseshoe, where I have no control at all over my own fate! I told you it was unlucky to tell your own fortune."

As she dealt out the cards, she continued, "That King of Clubs means a dark man—that's Roger. And that Queen of Hearts is a fair girl—that's you, Grace. And in about six months you are going to do me an injury which other people might think vital, only I'm going to get over it."

"How do you know that, Hestia?" asked Grace.

"From the position of the cards. A nine and an eight of Spades, which are very bad, come together, but there is

a good Heart card next—the nine of Hearts, the wish-card, which gives you your heart's desire. The nine of Spades is a very unhappy card—the worst in the pack—and the eight means delays, tears, and disappointments."

She had got to the end of the cards, and handed them back to Grace to shuffle. When they had been cut and turned face up again, she said :

" What's this ? The cards are very black, but I am protected on both sides, so that they won't actually injure me." But when, at regular intervals, every seventh card, she counted all four Aces, she said, " Something very serious must be going to happen, for this is called the Finger of God."

When the cards had been shuffled and cut for the third time, the first two she turned up were the Ace and the nine of Diamonds.

" This means sudden news," she said, " like a telegram, or a telephone. We shall know all about it soon. And I hope we shall ! " she added. " For in all the times that I've consulted the cards, I've never seen anything so terrifying."

" My goodness ! " said Grace. " If I'd known that you were going to be such a Cassandra, I don't think I should have asked you to dinner ! "

She had happened to notice that her father looked very uneasy.

" Aren't you getting frightened yourself, Hestia ? I told you what a risky thing you were doing in saving us."

" No—I am right at the end of the horseshoe, where I shan't be able to lift a little finger to help myself. I think it's rather amusing to be a looker-on while Fate is playing such a wonderful hand."

Then she pushed all the cards into a heap and said, " Whose fortune shall I tell next ? "

" Grace's," cried Roger.

" Shuffle them and cut them again, Grace," said Hestia.

Grace gave them another of her lightning shuffles, and cut the neat little packs towards Hestia—one, two, three. Hestia turned them face upwards, and as she dealt them out rapidly into a horseshoe, said :

"There are a good many Hearts in your fortune, Grace. This spells complications."

She counted rapidly with her finger from one to another, and said, "Eventually you will come to your heart's desire—that nine of Hearts, there. But there are a great many changes between you and it. A dark woman comes between you and it—that Queen of Spades—and that eight of Spades spells delay and some tears. But the main thing is that you travel through to your heart's desire at the end, and then it will be roses all the way."

"But what's this?" she said, when Grace had cut and shuffled the cards a second time. "The cards are coming out as black as they did for me—no, they're worse, for they are not so well protected! And there are those terrible Aces again," she said, as she counted on. "It's lucky that they've said already that you're going to get through all right in the end, or I should be regularly frightened for you!" was her verdict at the conclusion, as she heaped the cards together.

"Now tell Uncle Henry's!" cried Roger.

"No, you have yours told first—I'm not sure that I shall have mine told at all," said Mr. Lorraine, whose objection to the pastime was increasing.

"Right-ho!" said Roger. "I'm dying to hear what my fortune will be."

"You must shuffle and cut this time," said Hestia to him.

He did it so badly that she grew impatient. "Oh, muss them together on the table!" she cried. "I could tell where nearly every one of those cards is, with your shuffling!"

Roger obeyed meekly, and tidied them into a pack again, so slowly that Hestia inquired sarcastically, if he did not know what he wanted.

"How do you mean?" he asked. "Of course I know what I want—I want Grace."

With anyone else Grace would have been very angry, but the number of times that Roger had proposed to her and been rejected was the joke of the whole Fellowship, so she only laughed, and remarked, "Of course, we all

knew that, but you mustn't tell your wish out loud, or you don't get it."

"Ought I to have been wishing all the time that I was mussing them up?"

"Yes, of course you ought," exclaimed Hestia. "If you don't wish while you're shuffling and cutting, how is the unfortunate fortune-teller to establish contact with you?"

"I'm wishing," said Roger, with a grimace.

"Well, you ought to have done it while you were shuffling. Dear me," said Hestia, as she dealt out the little packs and counted—she was counting very rapidly now, she was so excited; she had left off telling them what individual cards signified, and was reading them off as an experienced telegraph operator reads the Morse code—"great changes will take place in your life within a very few months, Roger. You will change your profession; you will have a great change in your heart affairs; you will . . ."

Roger missed what Hestia was saying, because Grace broke in with, "Then I'm going to have some peace!" while Hestia said, "I'm afraid that you're a very dangerous person, Roger—Heart and Club women both have an influence over you. But it does not matter, because the dark woman may be older than you are."

"Oh, my goodness!" said Roger. "I hope she won't be old enough to be my mother!"

"No, she won't be that, or it would have been the Queen of Diamonds, which means white hair."

"My mother'd be very much obliged to you," said Roger. "She doesn't think that she's at all in the white-haired class."

"The Queen of Diamonds doesn't always mean white hair," explained Hestia, laughing. "It sometimes means a spiteful woman. But your old woman is quite nice, anyhow. Shuffle them again, please, Roger."

When he had shuffled and cut, and she had resumed, she began to look very grave, for the eight, the Ace, and the ten of Spades came out together.

"I can see by your looks, Hestia," he said, "that this

is something very bad. But don't hesitate to tell me—I expect I shall bear up."

She still hesitated.

" Honestly," he said, " if I was going to be killed to-morrow, I should like to know it, so that I shouldn't waste too much time on giddy-oxing."

" Well, of course, if you must know," she said, " these three cards coming together generally mean death—or, at any rate, an illness very near death, or imminent danger of death, if they are not protected by a very good card, and if this combination comes up again and again it means death, especially if the fortune-teller is one of those who leaves the two of Spades in."

" What's the two of Spades ? " he asked.

" It's called the coffin," was her answer.

" I think I'd better touch wood," said Roger, fumbling under the cloth for the leg of the table, and then, shuffling and cutting the cards which she pushed towards him with an alacrity which defied Fate. His courage seemed to be rewarded, for the rest of the cards occupied themselves with his matrimonial problems, in which it was foretold that he was going to be parted from a beautiful fair woman at the very moment of marriage. Grace was to have a reprieve, it appeared, for the cards ended up with the triumph of the dark woman.

" I don't care," said Roger. " I've got off that calamity, with all those black cards, and the four Aces bobbing up so pertinaciously. I'm not in for that, anyway ! "

" I'm afraid that you can't tell," objected Hestia. " The cards are funny things, and when your own life is going to be very full of events, things which are going to happen to everybody get crowded out."

" I can do quite well without them, thank you," said Roger.

Then all three turned to the Squire. " Now Mr. Lorraine ! " cried Hestia. " Now, Uncle Henry ! " cried Roger. " Now, father ! " cried Grace.

" No, I'd rather not," he protested. " I really hate this sort of thing. It gives me the creeps."

" Like the people who don't believe in ghosts, but are afraid of them ? " suggested Hestia.

"Exactly. I don't believe in it, but it makes me shudder. If you told me the sort of thing that you've just been telling Roger, it would get on my nerves horribly."

"I've never given anyone such a bad fortune as I've given Roger."

"Well, I'd rather not chance it."

"Oh yes, you must," urged all three, so vehemently that he felt as if it would be a slight on Hestia if he did not yield.

"Don't forget to wish, Uncle Henry," cried Roger, as he began to shuffle.

Mr. Lorraine smiled gravely. "I shan't forget to wish."

No sooner had Hestia begun to deal out the three little packs than the cards began to come up as black as they had for Hestia and Grace, and when she began to count, there, at regular intervals, every seventh card,—were the four Aces once more.

"The cards are full of something big to-night," Hestia admitted, "and there's a black something coming to us all. Let's hope that the last part of your fortune will improve like Roger's."

"What exactly do those four Aces mean?" asked Mr. Lorraine, anxiously.

"The Finger of God," said Hestia, "but not necessarily evil happenings. It simply means that the Great Power intervenes, and lifts people about like chessmen, and alters what seem to be unalterable situations."

But her face continued to grow graver. "My goodness, what a lot of Clubs!" she said.

"What do Clubs mean?" asked Mr. Lorraine, growing very uncomfortable.

"Business," she replied. But then, noticing how white he had turned, she added, "But you mustn't mind, because the cards can only tell such a very little way ahead. And, at any rate, this last part is nothing at all in comparison with that extraordinary repetition of extraordinary combinations at the beginning of your fortune. Coming out as they did, almost exactly the same as they did in Grace's and mine, they are the most extraordinary declarations of the cards which I ever remember. If I was really super-

stitious about them, I should expect that the most terrible calamity which had ever happened to the world was just going to begin—it might be the end of the world, by the way that the cards are speaking."

"Pray God that this has all been foolishness!" said Mr. Lorraine.

As soon as all their fortunes had been told, Roger began to "rag" about it.

"You're a bit out in your dates, Hestia," he said. "Anyone with half an eye can see that this mysterious calamity, which none of us can understand on any other basis, must refer to my octopus. By the by, what have they done with it? I consider that it's my property."

"I am afraid that I sent it to Plymouth in a cask of spirits, to be preserved in the museum," said Mr. Lorraine apologetically. "I did not know that you valued it."

"I don't, sir. I only thought that it would be rather a pity to throw such a curiosity on the dust-heap, after it had been *connected* with such illustrious persons."

"Oh, Roger, what a joke!" gasped Grace. "How dare you, when we are in such an agitated condition?"

"I don't see what you've got to grouse about! In six months' time you're going to have a nice dark husband—that must be me."

"Of course!" said Grace, laughing. "And you're going to have a beautiful fair wife."

"A lot of good you'll do me if we are going to be separated directly afterwards! That separation (it was at the church door, I suppose) is a lady novelist's wheeze—it's like the desert; there's nothing in it. But you've pleased Grace, Hestia, because you have prophesied a violent change in my way of living, which she's been trying to bring off ever since I left Oxford—even if I have to suffer a grievous bodily injury over it, which I suppose means losing my heart."

"Don't rag, Roger," said Grace. "It isn't fair, after Hestia's gone through a severe physical ordeal in order to 'concentrate' on interpreting the message of the cards."

"I don't mind him ragging, Grace. I'm so glad to

have the dear old boy alive, after that sea-devil had got hold of him. There's something altogether horrible and uncanny about it. I never heard of one in English waters before—it's either a deep-sea monster, or strayed here from the tropics in the hot weather."

Hestia was no longer the dark-browed sorceress ; the long, close, black lashes, which curled so delightfully at their tips, had drawn a curtain over those black-grey eyes.

"Rag away, Roger!" she said, putting her hand on his shoulder affectionately. "It will be a cold day when you can't rag any more."

But Grace drew him aside. "Leave off ragging, Roger—it's upsetting father. I never saw him look so gloomy before."

"Of course I will!" he answered, and going up to Mr. Lorraine said, "I'm afraid that I've done something to annoy you, sir?"

"Indeed you have not, my dear boy! It's myself that I am annoyed with. I've always sworn that I never would have my fortune told. *Quid sit futurum cras fuge quaerere.* And I wish to God I hadn't. I am dreadfully upset about it. I didn't think that I was superstitious, but—oh, well, I can't exactly describe what I mean, but I wish I hadn't done it."

Hestia, the sorceress, saw more than the cards told her. She had told many people their fortunes by the cards, and had watched them narrowly to see how they took her prognostications. Experience had shown her that those who were cast down as Mr. Lorraine had been, had invariably some great anxiety on their minds, which was aggravated instead of being relieved by what she had divined.

She also divined without any sorcerisms that Roger meant to propose to Grace before six hours were over. When both of them dined at the Manor House, it was Roger's custom to see the lovely Hestia home. Any other woman in the house would have dismissed him at the door, but Hestia used to make him come in and tempt him to kiss her.

It was not difficult. Roger, who was deeply and

irrevocably in love with Grace, was aware that he could make as much love as she demanded to Hestia Myrtle or any other woman, without in the least diminishing his affection or single-hearted devotion to Grace. It was in Roger's affectionate nature to make love to some woman, but if ever Grace married him, his desire for any other woman would cease ; his desire would be to her only, because he adored her. If Grace had let him make love to her, he would not have been willing to make love to anyone else. But Grace never had let him make love to her, though she might not object to a mistletoe kiss—with others present.

To-night, when he had only just been snatched from a terrible death, partly through her, though not by her own hands, Hestia felt specially fond of the gallant and good-looking Roger. She would have chanced discovery by her neighbours to have a long-drawn good-bye with him in the privacy of her own sitting-room. She yearned for his kisses ; she yearned to feel his strength. She knew that she could trust him to stop where she bade him.

It was only public opinion that she had to dread. The constitution of Via Pacis provided no machinery for the expulsion of any person who had once been appointed to the foundation. To the genuinely philanthropic mind of Mr. Lorraine, it had seemed that fixity of tenure was absolutely essential before any literary person, artist or musician could feel secure in abandoning the struggle in the metropolis, terrible as it might be, to retire on a pension at Via Pacis. So long as anyone did nothing which brought him into the clutches of the police, he had nothing to fear but manifestations of the hatred and scorn of his fellows.

For the protection of the community of Via Pacis from wolves which might enter in sheep's clothing, or from annoyance by trippers to Seacombe, the porter at the gate, by arrangement with the Chief Constable, was a member of the Devon Constabulary. To remind all whom it might concern of this fact, a pair of handcuffs hung over the mantelpiece in the porter's lodge.

To save Roger from a quandary, and to give him his chance with Grace, Hestia asked Mr. Lorraine to send one of the footmen to see her home, guessing that he might take her himself.

He responded with feverish alacrity, and with an absence of his usual ceremoniousness, which surprised her a little.

To her amazement, he did not lead the way directly to the North Porch, but stopped in the centre of the church, opposite a fallen fragment of the tower, which looked like a living rock, and was crowned with tall clusters of tobacco flowers, standing up like bracken, and filling the whole ruin with their fragrance. She thought that he was standing in front of them to draw her attention to their splendid plumes, and came back to him. But if anything had constrained him to stop at that particular spot, it was the fall of the tower, which had once uplifted so proud a head to heaven.

He surprised her by asking abruptly, "Do these things generally come true?"

"What things?" she asked absent-mindedly.

"The prophecies of our fortunes which you make from the cards."

What was she to do? To proclaim herself a charlatan by an air of, "You must not take us too seriously!" or to further dismay a man who was obviously suffering from a fit of "blue nerves?"

Hestia had no hesitation.

"Oh, the whole thing is charlatanism—there's no more in it than there is in table-turning, which you know is done by the spontaneous generation of electricity, which arises when a number of human beings hold their hands in a certain way."

"Thank God!" he ejaculated. "I ought to have been firm to my principles against having my fortune told—you gave me a horrid shock."

"Why? How?"

"Because you hinted at such awful possibilities that I have been turning over in my mind all the worst things that could happen."

"That was very foolish," she said. "One must not attach too much importance to what, after all, is only a game."

She spoke brave words, like the Welshman in Shakespeare's *Henry V.*, but she was far from feeling them. Never in her whole experience of fortune-telling had she been confronted with such terrifying combinations. She wondered herself how any happenings could be dreadful enough to substantiate them.

She need not have stultified herself. Superstition, when it is awaked, is far too strong to be brushed away like spider-webs. When he had left her at her door he almost ran back to the Manor House.

"I am going to say good-night to you, Roger, my lad, because I have a lot of papers to go through. I daresay that it will be two or three o'clock before I get to bed."

Roger rose to go.

Mr. Lorraine motioned him down again. "You need not hurry away because I have to leave you."

His daughter did not second the invitation. Roger noticed this, and as soon as Mr. Lorraine left them, he said, "Well, I must be going, Grace. I did not say so before your father, because he would have felt that he was driving me away, and it might have made him put off his letter-writing."

Grace particularly did not want Roger to stay. Opportunity would be sure to make him sentimental, and she had no heart to be severe with him to-night.

"Have a whiskey before you go, won't you?" she felt compelled to say, and Roger, who had no desire for whiskey at that moment, accepted on the principle of any port in a storm.

"Ring for Collins, will you?"

Roger rang, and Collins appeared with the whiskey like an automaton.

"Help yourself, Roger," she said, when the servant had left the room.

Roger poured out a very small one, and having thus the license to remain a few further minutes, fell into the very rut that Grace intended him to avoid. For, taking

a cigarette from a case which she had given him on some birthday, he picked out a match from a beautiful matchstand of inlaid brass on an Arab *kursi*, and, poising it between his fingers before he struck it, he began :

“ I owe my life to you, Grace.”

“ You risked it for me, Roger.”

“ I couldn’t do less,” he said, ignoring the fact that he could have done so much more by jumping into the boat than by jumping into the water.

“ Nor I.”

“ It makes me feel much closer than I have ever felt before.”

“ It must be admitted that when two people have almost died for each other, and died together, they must be the closest friends in the world afterwards,” said Grace, regarding affectionately the splendid manhood which was her possession, won back from the deep by her own strength and bravery, had it not already been hers by divine conquest.

She knew how she had felt during those terrible minutes. She had known the agony of death ; she had made the supreme fight which a strong and courageous human being can make for life—for her life and for the life of the man whom she had dived to save. And as she lost her senses she had believed that the thread of life had snapped, and that all her struggle with death and hell was over.

And what a titanic struggle it had been ! She had gone into it with heavy odds on her side. She was an expert swimmer ; she had a lifeline round her body, and only a few yards to sink herself ; the body of the man she sought could not be far—it was shut in by the wall of the little harbour. But once down there, she had felt herself entangled in the same death-trap into which Roger had fallen ; with other tentacles the monster bound the arms which were trying to tear its prey from it. She could not fight it ; she could not pull the rope to give the alarm. Twist her body about as she might, she could neither free herself, nor jerk the cord. It was not until the monster itself, recognizing another enemy in the

cord, attacked it with a tentacle, that Bernafay and the Count felt the faint tug which made them pull up.

What had her thoughts been when she felt life slipping away? Chief and overmastering among them was the thought that she must make one more effort for Roger's sake. His only chance of life depended on her. It was him, not herself, that she thought of. He was helpless and unconscious; she had her senses, at any rate, and hoped against hope that she could extricate herself from the bank of seaweed trailers which had drifted into their harbour. That her enemy was alive she had no suspicion. She knew how deadly the stalks and streamers of seaweed bushes could be. Death brought no fears to her, though she loved life, and was fighting so hard for it. It was Roger, Roger, till the end came. Then she had died, as far as anyone can die without the soul leaving the body, but after what a fight! After living a lifetime in a minute!

She wanted to know now how Roger had felt. So far, they had not spoken of what happened to them in the water. They were too full of joy and thankfulness at having escaped from it.

"Tell me exactly what you remember of our accident, Roger," she said, when he had smoked in silence for a few minutes, trying to find words for what he was striving to say. She had not lighted a cigarette herself because she did not wish to encourage him to stay, and now she had practically invited him to talk for as long as he liked.

"When I got to the end of my dive," he said, "I thought a big branch of seaweed had drifted into the harbour. I was surprised that it was so erect, as it was out of the flow of the tide, and thought it the most troublesome seaweed for a swimmer which I had ever struck.

"I tried to get away from it with all my strength. I found I couldn't move; it tangled tighter and tighter round me, and I got first frightened and then desperate, and then I lost consciousness. And if you had not dived to save me, I should not have been here now."

"Grace dearest," he continued, "there is only one way in which I can thank you adequately, and that is by devoting my life to you."

Grace was not prepared for such a lightning transition from the subject she wanted to hear about to the subject she so earnestly wished to avoid.

"But, Roger," she said—she could not resist a smile—"you are not offering me anything new. You've been wanting to devote your life to me ever since you have come to years of discretion. It would be a much greater thing if you were to devote your ambition and energies to making yourself the sort of husband whom I could accept."

"Will you marry me if I do?" he asked, as if it was as simple as proclaiming the banns.

"Of course I will—if you say good-night directly."

"That's what I have got to do in my marriage with the fair woman. I suppose the cards could not have referred to this?"

CHAPTER IX

THE FOUNDING OF THE UNION JACK ELECTRICAL ASSOCIATION.

MR. LORRAINE had good reason for being disquieted by Hestia's prophecies, for he had been guilty of unpardonable folly in the conduct of his affairs.

It had all originated with the sale of Lorraine's Bank at Plymouth, from which about half of his remaining income was derived, to the Bank of England and Wales, which was in itself a combination of two of the largest Joint Stock banks.

Lorraine's Bank was not a tottering affair, sold on account of its weakness, but a wealthy and prosperous institution which appealed to the shrewd directors of the Bank of England and Wales because it made such little use of its opportunities. For this reason they had persuaded Mr. Lorraine to sell right out to them, instead of remaining the principal shareholder under their control.

Their lighting on this opportunity was not fortuitous. In fact, the suggestion was made to them by a naturalized German, a certain Mr. Oppidan, a friend of Mr. Lorraine's.

Mr. Oppidan may have been largely influenced by friendship for Mr. Lorraine, since he had a suggestion to make for the investment of the money which very greatly increased Mr. Lorraine's income for some years. On the other hand, he was certainly not unaware that it was much easier to persuade Mr. Lorraine to invest than to get the money from a bank in the ordinary way.

Having, on his friend Mr. Oppidan's advice, sold the bank, at a very satisfactory figure, his next idea was to follow that astute person's advice and invest the money in a business which would bring in a much higher percentage. He made the arrangements for this before he finally agreed to sell the bank.

Patriotism should have stopped him. But being a Free-Trader of the old school, he saw no harm in ruining British industries in order to make an increase, which he did not require, to his income.

The scheme which the amiable Mr. Oppidan suggested to him was that he should start an office for lending money, under the implied guarantee of the German Government, at a high rate of interest, to a company which bought up English businesses connected with the sale of electrical apparatus. The manufacturing side of these businesses was allowed to die out, and their machinery, for the distribution of the commodities in which they dealt, was used for the sale of much cheaper articles made in Germany. Instead of being manufacturers, they became importers, and increased their turnovers and their profits beyond all expectation.

That this diminished the capacity of Great Britain in producing articles, which would be absolutely essential in case of a war between Great Britain and Germany, did not trouble Mr. Lorraine if it occurred to him, because, like all men of his stamp, he had refused to believe it possible that our Quaker brother would ever quarrel with us.

Meanwhile his income increased by leaps and bounds, until it seemed as if one day he might again be as wealthy as he had been before he transferred half his capital to the foundation and endowment of the Via Pacis Fellowship, on which he lavished large sums of his new profits.

A few years before the war Mr. Oppidan came to him with a fresh suggestion.

"Are you satisfied with what I have done for you, Mr. Lorraine?"

"More than satisfied, Oppidan."

"Well, I've got a fresh suggestion to make to you. I don't think, well as you've done out of it, you are making

anything like what you ought to, for it was your capital which established all these concerns, and instead of reaping the whole of the percentage which it earns, you are only reaping loan interest."

"It's exceedingly good of you, Oppidan. What do you suggest?"

"It's a long business for me to explain in conversation, and for you to carry in your head," said Mr. Oppidan, "but you have it here."

He handed him a typewritten paper in which the suggestions were set forth with admirable plainness. But they were more disastrous to England than ever. A man who loved his country as Mr. Lorraine undoubtedly did, needed to be as silly as a sheep to find it compatible with his duties as an Englishman.

This point of view did not strike him. He looked upon it purely as a business proposition, and as a business proposition it was very handsome and straightforward. It proposed, on condition of his putting in an equal amount of new capital, to allow him to convert the money, which he had advanced to the company as a loan, at par into one-pound shares which were worth between two and three pounds.

He had abundant proof of their stability, and from all points of view, except that of a patriotic Englishman, the offer was most advantageous. The only drawback was that all his money for investment was already invested in the business.

He explained this to Mr. Oppidan, who replied, "Well, with a landed property like yours, you could easily raise the money on a mortgage, from one or more of the great insurance companies at four and a half per cent., and you will be making fifteen or twenty. But perhaps that idea is altogether unfeasible? I can't advise you about that. All I can point out is that if you are able to double your investment in this way, you will be on a fair way to becoming a millionaire. You had better take the advice of your lawyer, Mr. . . ."

"Skewen."

"Yes, Mr. Skewen." Mr. Oppidan had sized up the

narrow Mr. Skewen, and had no fears of the result. His interview with Mr. Lorraine had taken place in Plymouth ; he had taken care that it should, having an eye on Mr. Skewen, whom he had already urged to become a director, on very favourable terms, in the Union Jack Electrical Association, as it was to be called, on being registered as a British company.

" What do you think of this, Skewen ? " said Mr. Lorraine, handing him the paper.

" I've seen it," he replied. " I may tell you at once that I am about to join the Board of Directors. So I am a prejudiced party ; perhaps you ought not to consult me."

" It's very honourable of you to put it in that way, Skewen, but I prefer to regard it as an evidence of what you think of the soundness of the undertaking."

" Well," said Mr. Skewen, " I have every reason for confidence in the concern, since, as your solicitor, I have for several years seen the figures of the private business which is going to be formed into the company, and know what dividends it has paid. But I must warn you that I am not taking a large interest in the company myself, because I never permit myself to venture more than a certain sum in any one speculation."

" That's a very sound rule," said Mr. Lorraine, " and I confess to hesitating very much before doubling my holding, even if I can raise the money without inconvenience. But of course I have an enormous interest in doing so, because it doubles, perhaps trebles, the value of the money which I have advanced to the undertaking as a loan."

" That is, indeed, a tremendous inducement. And of course you can raise the money on mortgage on your estates. . . ." He paused to think for a minute, and continued, " Yes, I think the security is sufficient for the amount. And the income derived from the investment is so very large that you would be able to pay off the mortgage very rapidly. Of course, it is risking everything you have. But the risk is not at all commensurate to the inducement.

" I do not say this lightly, sir," he continued, " because

I have gone into everything connected with the matter with extreme care, and I see nothing in this paper which is not amply borne out by facts with which I am personally acquainted, and reasonable deductions therefrom. I must say," he said, warming up, "that it is one of the fairest and most generous propositions which has ever come before me. I should do it, Mr. Lorraine, I should do it ! "

"Very well, Skewen, I will do it. And when you've got the papers in order, to show the value of the security which we are offering, we must approach the insurance company with which we insure my property and see if they will arrange the mortgage."

"Locally, sir, or in London ? "

"I think you might make the application locally. It would be of great advantage to the local manager through whose hands it goes. And the head office is sure to consult him."

The manager of the insurance company took the extreme step of going to Mr. Lorraine privately, and entreating him not to mortgage the estate, advantageous to himself as the carrying through of the matter seemed.

"The investment may be the soundest in the world, Mr. Lorraine," he said, "but I don't think that, even if it is not entailed, any man has the right to mortgage the property which has been in his family for four hundred years in order to put the money into a speculation."

But Mr. Lorraine insisted—he could be very obstinate—and in due time the proposition was accepted by the company, and £100,000 paid over to the Union Jack Electrical Association.

* * * * *

The profits at first were enormous. The prospects held forth in the prospectus were more than fulfilled.

Unfortunately, in the year 1913, when he had paid off the mortgage out of the immense profits he had made, he was persuaded to re-mortgage the property for a similar extension of the company. It was as if there was an eagle, waiting to pounce on him the moment he was out of the wood, which indeed was the case, for the orders of the great

electric combine in Germany, whose goods were now the only commodities sold by the Union Jack Electrical Ass. Ltd., were that not only English manufactories which could be converted into agencies for importing its goods were to be bought up, but also German importers' businesses, and this entailed the finding of a great deal of capital, which had to be British capital under German control. The pure Britishness of the Union Jack Electrical Ass. Ltd. was trumpeted in every way. It became a factor and almost a nuisance in every electrical business in England.

Mr. Oppidan's mission was to find British capital, to buy up British electrical manufactories, in order to close down the manufacturing side of the business, and use the distributing side for selling the German article, thus killing two birds with one stone—finding a market for the German manufacturer, and depriving England of a vital commodity if she quarrelled with Germany.

Mr. Henry Lorraine, the chairman of the Union Jack Electrical Association, was quite unequal to the post.

The proverb, "It's a very good world that we live in, to lend or to spend or to give in," applied to him more than most mortals. By giving *carte blanche* and sacrificing half his great wealth, he could found a *Via Pacis* efficiently, but if he had had to form a company to do it he would have made a grotesque failure. He had no capacity; he was only a patron.

In the Union Jack Electrical Association he was a cat-s-paw, but while Mr. Oppidan meant to use him as a tool, he was sincerely attached to his simple and generous friend, and meant also to make him a millionaire.

CHAPTER X

DESCENSUS AVERNI

THE day that Mr. Lorraine paid off the last instalment of the mortgage on Via Pacis, out of the dividends earned by the Union Jack Electrical Ass. Ltd., it seemed to him that the culminating point in his fortunes had arrived. By his own sagacity in business he had made himself a richer man than he was before the foundation of the Fellowship of Via Pacis.

He had made nearly half a million of money, because the hundred thousand one-pound shares, into which the money he had loaned to the German company had been converted, and the further hundred thousand one-pound shares which he had mortgaged his estate to purchase at par, were now worth between three and four pounds each.

Though Mr. Oppidan and Mr. Skewen assured him that they must go much higher, he determined to sell out and invest the money in debentures.

“Don’t be a fool!” said Mr. Oppidan. “These Union Jacks are as safe as debentures, and bring you in three or four times the rate of interest.”

“But I don’t want so much money. I shall have to give this away to some new development of Via Pacis if I am going to get any pleasure out of it.”

“Think how much more you’ll be able to do as a millionaire,” said Mr. Oppidan. “It is only given to one man in a million to become a millionaire. You are one of those fortunate people, and you draw back right at the outset.”

"I don't want to be a millionaire. I only want never to be worse off than I am now."

"Tut, tut, man! We can employ profitably as much capital again as we have now, and it is only right that those who are in the thing already should reap the profits. We'll obtain leave to enlarge our capital by fifty per cent., and allow shareholders to buy at par one new one-pound share for every two which they hold." Mr. Oppidan spoke with perfectly honest intentions. He was, after Mr. Lorraine—a very long way after—the largest shareholder in the Union Jack.

"Roughly speaking, I could buy over eighty-five thousand of the new shares by selling enough of the old ones to find the money."

"Why should you throw away the chance of buying fifteen thousand shares, representing at the market price of the shares about fifty thousand pounds, when you can mortgage your estates again, and raise money at four and a half per cent. which is going to bring you in fifteen or twenty?"

"Because I want to draw in my horns, instead of putting them out."

"That's very unlucky. Directly a lucky speculator begins to hedge, he begins to lose." Like most Germans, Mr. Oppidan was a born gambler.

"I won't do it," said Mr. Lorraine, with a sudden burst of firmness.

"But have you realized, my dear Mr. Lorraine, that if you do it you are a millionaire, for you will hold three hundred thousand pounds' worth of Union Jack Stock, and three hundred thousand pounds' worth of Union Jack Stock is to-day worth one million and fifty thousand pounds?"

"A millionaire!" gasped Mr. Lorraine.

"Yes, a millionaire, my dear sir."

The round figures dazzled the Squire. By his own brains, after giving away half his fortune, he had multiplied it into a million! The temptation, the excitement, were too great for him. He could not resist them.

The insurance company, of course, was only too glad to

take the mortgage again, which had been so triumphantly paid off, and the necessary powers for enlarging the capital of the company were obtained without difficulty; a company which was paying nearly twenty per cent., and had its one-pound shares worth getting on for four pounds, was clearly entitled to enlarge its capital, especially since the extension was confined to its own shareholders.

For a short time Mr. Lorraine was a millionaire.

* * * * *

Again he announced his intention of selling out, paying off his mortgage, and investing the balance in safe five per cent. investments. It is easy for a millionaire to find safe five per cent. investments.

"And have fifteen thousand a year, instead of fifty or sixty!" cried the horrified Mr. Oppidan, picturing the effect on the stock of the sale of three hundred thousand shares.

"It's more than I want," protested Mr. Lorraine.

"It may be, but think how much good you could do with the rest!"

"That's true," admitted Mr. Lorraine, and once more allowed himself to be supersuaded.

* * * * *

The limitations of the Union Jack Electrical Association had been reached at last, though the war was not yet in sight. The directors, who let Mr. Oppidan lead them by the nose, had bought so feverishly, not to say recklessly, that the returns began to decrease alarmingly.

Much of the property recently purchased had not been of the same class as the earlier purchases, but since he aimed at a monopoly, it had to be purchased.

Decreasing profits depreciated the price of the shares, and left Mr. Lorraine on the horns of a dilemma. Should he sell before they had depreciated any further, and make his mortgaged estate and the money he had received from selling his bank secure? He could still do that, unless putting such a large block of shares on the market, even in the most discreet way, caused a ruinous drop in prices.

By doing it he would lose every penny of profit he had made by all his speculating.

He went to see his lawyer about it.

"Skewen," he said, "I have decided to sell out of the Union Jack Electrical Association, lock, stock, and barrel. It was bad enough for my nerves when they were going up by leaps and bounds. Now that they are going down by leaps and bounds I can't stand it. I'm watching and worrying over those shares all day long; I can't call my soul my own. I don't think of anything but the Stock Exchange."

"You can't do this, sir. There are other people in it besides yourself, though you are by far the largest shareholder. If you sell out, the shares would drop to par, and goodness only knows if they would stay there! Think of all the widows and orphans who must have invested in the Union Jacks, and who would be ruined, if their stock, which is down enough already, slipped down to a quarter of what they had paid for it!"

Mr. Skewen was thinking of his own five hundred pounds, and his fees as a director, more than he was thinking of other people's widows and orphans. But it was a style of oratory to which he was inclined, and he knew his man.

"I hadn't thought of that," said Mr. Lorraine. "Certainly I am not going to have the ruin of widows and orphans on my head."

Mr. Skewen did not mind the ruin of Mr. Lorraine being on his head, though he had received many a hundred pounds from him. He felt under no obligation to warn him, though he was being consulted as a legal adviser.

Mr. Lorraine, in order that others might not suffer, decided to retain all his holding. And Mr. Oppidan, having the hint from Mr. Skewen, talked such invincible optimism to him that on the day of the Pennylegion fête, he was able to convince himself that all was well, and to make ambitious plans for the future of Via Pacis when the favourable turn should have come.

But Hestia's fortune-telling reawakened the fears

which he had put to sleep, and he saw himself standing on the brink of the precipice.

He did not sleep a wink that night. He was convinced that what Hestia said was true, and that she knew it was true, and only accused herself of charlatanry to relieve his feelings: he wrote peremptory letters to Mr. Oppidan and Mr. Skewen about selling.

His presentiments were justified, for the morning's letters included a terrifying one from his stockbroker. There had been another slump in the shares of the Union Jack.

The meshes of the net drawn round him were now of strangling tightness. It had come to this—that if he sold out at once, contriving not to frighten the market, he might for his entire holding of three hundred thousand shares realize sufficient to pay off the mortgage of one hundred thousand pounds, but hardly save a penny of the money which he received for the sale of his bank. A cutting from *The Financial News*, which the broker enclosed, said that the Union Jack directors had over-bought businesses hopelessly, that the recent purchases had not been worked as thoroughly as the earlier had been, that there was, thank goodness, something like an organized opposition being raised against the killing of British manufactures, and the using of the channels through which they had been accustomed to sell for German dumps. The dumping, said the article, had been overdone. Only such an easy-going nation as the English would have tolerated such a clumsy form of peaceful penetration.

He called Mr. Oppidan up on the trunk-line telephone at the Union Jack offices in Throgmorton Avenue, E.C.

"Are we downhearted?" Mr. Oppidan said. "No! The German Government, though they have not guaranteed the company, as they guaranteed the loan, won't let it go down. I'll have it put forward in the right quarter, and we shall get assistance from them until the crisis is tided over, and we begin to get our own proper returns, and with them our own proper dividends, again."

Mr. Lorraine no longer contemplated selling out.

Grace Lorraine

What there was left in him of the John Bull rebelled against surrendering all his fruits without a struggle. But he knew from the reports before him that, unless he realized at once, it was impossible for him to meet the payments due on the mortgage, so he wrote to the insurance company, and explained how affairs stood, and asked them to accommodate him on the necessary terms.

They consented, and the crisis was outwardly tided over.

But his anxiety allowed him less sleep than a fever, in which the patient can only dream, without losing consciousness. Constantly, when Grace or the butler spoke to him, he did not hear what they said, because his dream was eternally going over the various stages at which he had been inclined to sell out.

First his dream would go back to that golden point when he had paid off the earlier mortgage, out of the dividends of the Union Jack, and was deciding whether he should sell out, worth seven hundred thousand pounds, or go on and, by a stroke of his pen, make himself a millionaire.

The very thought of it maddened him, and it maddened him even more to think that he had not got out of the Union Jack at the moment when he stood exactly as he stood before he went into it. But when his mind reached the point at which the shares were worth just enough to let him save the lands of his ancestors by sacrificing all the money which he had received for the bank, he cursed himself for a fool, because he had not seized the *golden opportunity*. That achievement, in his present state, overshadowed the two greater.

The Clubs, which had overwhelmed him when his fortune was being told by Hestia, were justifying themselves with a vengeance. But he still nursed hope, until the grim prophecies of the four Aces began to materialize.

More than ever was he convinced of the baneful powers of fortune-telling in those days of July, 1914, when stocks and shares, in the presence of the great German plot for beggaring the world before the cutting of throats began, commenced to reel like chimneys in an earthquake, and only the genius and firmness of Mr. Lloyd

George and his advisers prevented a universal catastrophe—the greatest achievement of any Minister in the history of Cabinets.

The moratorium prevented the sale of any shares except at impossible prices. If there had been no moratorium it would have taken a bold man to offer five shillings apiece for the one-pound shares, fully paid up, of the Union Jack Electrical Association, weighed down as they were by the common knowledge that the Association supplied the machinery for the plot to deprive Great Britain of all her makers of electrical apparatus, so as to leave her helpless in the case of a war with Germany.

When war was declared, the directors of the insurance company met and since, in spite of notice no interest had been paid for four months past, decreed the instant sale of Mr. Lorraine's estates, and during the discussion some very severe things were said upon his conduct in lending himself to such a scheme. They did not know that his behaviour had been the result of pure fatuity—that he would have been as loth to help it on as Lord Kitchener himself, if he had understood the effect of what he was doing, and that they would not have been meeting to decree his destruction if he had not indignantly refused to act on the intimation which came to him through his assiduous friend, Mr. Oppidan, that if Mr. Lorraine would let him know how much money he needed to save his estates being sold, he should have the loan of it from the German Secret Service Fund for as long as he required.

Henry Lorraine preferred bankruptcy.

CHAPTER XI

THE SQUIRE BREAKS HIS BANKRUPTCY TO THE RECTOR

“THE Squire, my lady,” said her parlourmaid to Lady Cynthia Wynyard, about a month after the beginning of the war.

Lady Cynthia hurried down, and found Mr. Lorraine talking to her father-in-law. He was smiling and serene, a different person altogether from the harassed and depressed creature she had seen a few days before. He shook hands and went on talking to the Rector.

“I’ve come to tell you, Wynyard, that I’ve lost all my money!” he said, almost gleefully.

The loss might have been the Rector’s own, he looked so stricken. “Oh, my dear old friend, how terrible! How magnificently you are bearing up!”

“I have nothing to bear up against! On the contrary, it is the first day of relief that I have known for two whole years.”

“Frankly, I can’t understand you.”

“I was terribly involved before the July debacle on the Stock Exchange, and that has broken me irretrievably. A few years ago I was making enormous profits—you will remember my telling you so when I gave you those large sums for extensions at Via Pacis, but I very foolishly mortgaged my estate for a gigantic extension of my company, just as the bad times began, and have ever since then been struggling with the octopus—I think that is rather a natural parallel for me to make—of speculation, and at each effort the tentacles have been wound round

me more inextricably. It is only now, when I am drowned, and sunk to the bottom of the sea, that I can cease struggling. You can't imagine what a relief it is to abandon yourself to your fate!"

"You must know that you will come out of it all right, Lorraine, or you would not talk like this."

"I assure you that I shall not. I have absolutely nothing left."

"Are you serious?"

"Quite."

"Then what will you do?"

"Appoint myself to the mastership of the College. I wanted to take the pension just vacated by John Penny-legion, but How insists on taking that and giving up the mastership to me. Fortunately we shall have enough clothes to last us for a few years, and by that time we shall be accustomed to the garments of poverty."

"And what shall you do with the Manor House?"

"It is no longer mine—it belongs to the insurance company, and they are going to sell it with all its contents."

"The estates, too, must have gone, I gather from what you say?"

"Everything. The war has lost me a quarter of a million at least."

"But the monastery . . . ?"

"The almshouses are safe. The funds for their upkeep and the pensions were, as you know, handed over to trustees when I made the foundation."

"And you really contemplate taking the mastership?"

"Sincerely I do, since the power of nominating myself to it is the only means of subsistence which I shall have."

"You must not do this, Lorraine. It is a very good living which you gave me, and I have some private means, and there are plenty of rooms in the Rectory. You can take the money from the College if you like, but you and your daughter must come and live with us!"

"Yes, indeed you must!" echoed Lady Cynthia. "And it will be the greatest happiness to us to be able to do this little for Mr. Wynyard's lifelong benefactor, even if there were not a further reason!"

"We are deeply grateful to you both, Wynyard, but we cannot accept your hospitality. My speculations are entirely my own fault—I will not say that my losses are. I read in them the finger of God, which swept all the chessmen with which the world was playing off the chess-board of the nations, and left them in the chaos of this war."—He used Hestia's metaphors because they had made such a profound impression on him.—"But I am responsible for the speculations, and the only way I can pay for them is by eating the bread of charity."

"I think that it is terrible for you to submit to this humiliation when you have friends who would esteem no pleasure so great as having you to live with them always."

"I can assure you that I am looking forward to it. It will only be the Way of Peace for me. The absolute absence of care will be a veritable resurrection."

"What can we do for you, then, Lorraine? Do let us do something!"

"You shall do something. I know that you have some rooms not furnished. You shall take care of our household gods when we move out. Our creditors have been very generous about this matter: they invited us, as an appreciation of the way in which I have disclosed every asset I possess and thrown it into the melting pot—they have invited us, I say, to reserve any article for which we have any personal affection."

"Our whole top story is at your disposal. We don't use any of it."

"A very small room will hold them all. When a man has no money, the fewer possessions he has, the better off he is. Then he has only himself to protect from the weather."

"This may be true philosophy, Lorraine, but it is very hard to put into practice, when household gods have been passing from father to son for nearly four hundred years."

"It's only the end of an old song."

"I disagree with you—it is a wound to the community in which you live, and to the life of Art."

" Well, I suppose it is! But the wound has been delivered, and all we can hope is that the place won't be bought by a *nouveau riche* who has made his money in trade! For he'd be sure to paint and paper it throughout, and give Maple an order to refurnish it."

" God forbid!" said the Rector.

CHAPTER XII

L'HOMME PROPOSE

LADY CYNTHIA went off to break it to Roger. She was shocked at the calmness with which he received the news, but a little relieved when he said :

“ I'll go and see Grace to tell her how sorry I am.”

“ You had better go round with your father after dinner. He has to see Mr. Lorraine about various sums of money which he had promised him for improvements at Via Pacis, which have been spent but have not been paid over. As resident trustee he keeps the journals of the improvements.”

When Roger went up after dinner, he was shown into Grace's workroom. The great round-headed windows which filled in the arches of the *loggia* were all opened wide to the sky. The evening was rather chill to the pensioners of the monastery, who had gone into the library or their own houses, instead of hanging about the gardens and sea-front, as had been their wont for the past weeks. But to Grace it was stiflingly oppressive. She had only heard of their ruin that afternoon, and though she was prepared to meet their lot with courage and patience, she could not help a surge of hot feelings and fierce emotions.

“ Come in ! ” she called out impatiently, as she heard the knock at the door.

“ Oh, it's you, Roger, is it ? You need not come to tell me of your pity ! ”

His face fell. She knew that she had been cruel.

"No, I don't mean that—I only mean that I know that you sympathize with me, but it pains me to hear it."

"I didn't come to tell you that," said Roger ruefully.
"I knew you wouldn't let me."

"Well, what did you come for, dear Roger? You mustn't mind my being cast down." She raised the violet eyes for the first time since he had entered the room, and he saw that the lids were red with weeping.

"I've come to ask you again to marry me, Grace, now that the nightmare has been removed."

"The nightmare?" she sobbed.

"Yes, the nightmare of your wealth—it was a nightmare to me, I can tell you! Many a time have I prayed that this might happen!"

"Oh, Roger, how could you be so wicked?"

"Why, with my three hundred a year, and what I shall make at the Bar, I ought to be able to keep you soon."

Grace smiled amid her tears. "Only this summer you told me that the reason you were never in your chambers was that it was hopeless to try and make anything at the Bar!"

"I had nothing to hope for *then*."

She could not be so brutal as to point out that he had no more to hope for *now*. "But, Roger, you mustn't think of marrying and the Bar now—you must go and fight for your country!"

"Aren't I trying to? I put my name down for a commission on the day they issued the notice, both at Rugby and Oxford?"

"What would you do if they both gave it to you at the same time?"

It was a futile question she knew. She only asked it to keep him off the question which he had come to ask.

"They couldn't make me serve in two places at once."

"You ought to have heard by now."

"I ought to have heard within a week, since they asked for old O.T.C. men to give their names in. And I gave my address here—that's the reason why I am at home."

"I'm glad you told me this, Roger. I hated your being at home doing nothing, while other men were risking their lives for their country!"

"I'd go to-morrow if they'd take me! All I want is the assurance that you'll marry me when I get back, if I ever do get back, because an officer has only a dog's chance."

"I can't promise, Roger . . . until you've done what I said."

"I'll do anything you like if you will! I'll go into a shop or anything. . . ."

"It isn't that. I'd marry you if we both had to go into shops if I thought that I could be happy with you."

"And couldn't you?"

"No, I don't think I could. I should find almost anyone in Via Pacis more companionable than you, and it's companionship more than anything else which a woman wants when she gives herself to a man. Besides, I wasn't made to be poor, Roger—I can't tell you how I dread it! You would lead a dog's life with me."

"Well, what are you going to do when you leave here?" he asked desperately.

"We're not going away at all." She groaned. "Dad has nominated himself to the Mastership; Mr. How insisted on taking Mr. Pennylegion's place."

"And you hate it dreadfully, Grace?"

"I feel as if I'd rather die. Isn't it wicked of me, Roger? We've given our lives to making existence at Via Pacis as ideal as possible, and I've told myself over and over again that the pensioners ought to be the happiest people in the world if they only seek rest and freedom from care. But, oh, it's so different when you have to do it yourself, and you've been accustomed to a full life, and you've not been a woman very long!"

"But you can come to the Rectory an awful lot, and play tennis, and have meals with us—you will, won't you?"

"I don't feel as if I could do anything, except live the life of a hermit, and read novels with happy endings!"

CHAPTER XIII

INTRODUCING MR. RICHMOND EBBUTT

THE next few weeks were among the most painful in the life of Grace Lorraine.

They were obliged to go on living in their own house, in the interest of their creditors. The agents were unanimous in declaring that the chance of getting the full value for the house and its contents would be multiplied by selling it in the occupation of its owners. A house nearly 300 years old, with furnishings which went back to its foundation, and to an older house for another century, hardly ever comes into the market, and such an asset must not be sacrificed.

They were even asked by their creditors to live on the same scale as before, without being wilfully extravagant.

It was a ghostly and miserable performance, and the iron entered into Grace's soul, though the servants, who were informed of everything, performed their tasks with infinite good feeling.

From time to time someone would come down from London to look at the place, and Mr. Lorraine would do his poor best to be a Barnum, in order to repay the consideration of their creditors, carefully heeding the caution not to betray the fact that he was only a caretaker. But it was of no use; the place was too obviously costly for most people, and one or two took objection to the presence of the Fellowship of Via Pacis in the gardens.

So it went on till a day at the end of September, when

a card was sent in with an auctioneer's order to view the house :

MR. RICHMOND EBBUTT.

Cin., Ohio.

The servant was followed by a tall American, clean-shaven, with bright dark eyes, emphasized by very red cheeks and iron-grey hair as smooth as marble. He was dressed in an admirably cut morning-coat, and dark striped trousers—in fact, dressed for a town call, except that he had a soft black felt hat with a wide flat brim, instead of a silk hat. He bowed most courteously.

"I came to look over this beautiful mansion of yours, with a view to purchase. I have always had a desire to possess a *genuwine* antique—it is *genuwine*, tell me that?"

"Most certainly it is—you can see the archives if you wish."

"Thanks—I kind of lose myself in that style of writing. I'll take your word for it. *Stooart*, I think it said the premises were, in the ad.?"

Mr. Lorraine looked mystified. But Grace, who had remained with him, was quicker, and said, "Yes, it is *Stuart*."

"Not meaning that any of the family built it?"

"No, only the period."

"Period's good enough for me. Can we perceive?"

"Certainly," said Mr. Lorraine, leading the way into a dining-room, fifty feet long, panelled in dark seventeenth-century oak, with efflorescent cherubs and scrolls.

"Oh my!" said Mr. Richmond Ebbutt. "And chairs to match! Whose?"

Not getting any response, he turned one upside down, with great care, to find the maker's name.

"I know something about furniture," he said. "It was one of my lines. I know 'most any make of modern antique, but I couldn't quite place these."

"These chairs were made for the house when it was

built, in 1607," said Mr. Lorraine. " We have the maker's name in the estate accounts, I'm sure. I'll have it looked out for you if you wish."

" 'Nough for me!" gasped Mr. Ebbutt. " America was only begun that year from my point of view, with the founding of Jamestown. You'd have the accounts for Jamestown if it was in your country! My father went west from Virginia—that's the reason he called me Richmond."

" We have older things in the Abbot's Lodging," said Mr. Lorraine, " things that were there when it came to us, but I don't suppose that you would think them very beautiful. I gave them to the College."

" The College? Is it an *ed*ducational institootion?"

" No! a charity. We'll take you there when you have seen the house and garden."

" Abbot's Lodging—a real Abbot's Lodging of the olden time?"

" Yes."

" Included in the sale?"

" I'm afraid not."

" I'm sorry."

" But the Master will let you see it every day if you wish to."

" The Master?"

" The Master of the College."

" I don't understand, but I suppose it's all right. Have the reception rooms got *Stooart* furniture too?"

" Yes," said Grace, " though I am afraid that we have introduced some more comfortable chairs and sofas as well."

" That's an idea, too."

The room he liked best was a *loggia*, which had been glazed-in—used by Grace as her special room. It was full of the little treasures which she had collected on her travels, and other pretty things with which a child of fortune surrounds herself.

" These won't be left, of course?"

" Everything will be left."

" Then I shall make this room mine if I buy the place!"

Grace did not take it as a compliment. She coloured angrily. He noticed it, and was pained, and only just put his head into her bedroom when they came to it, though it had an equal or greater fascination for him. It was the first time, rich as he was, that he had been brought into contact with the super-elegancies of a woman like Grace.

The stately suites of the house, its other stately appurtenances, impressed him vastly, but they failed to fascinate him in the same degree.

"Don't show me any more house," he said, before they were half-way through it. "I'm informed on that, and I'm putting you to a great deal of trouble."

"Not in the least! I am here to show you everything." Mr. Ebbutt did not know how literally the owner of the great house was speaking. "Will you see the stables now, or the garden?"

"Stables don't trouble me much—my chauffeur lives in them, not me. And I have the idea that he does not like my putting my head in too much. Garden's different, I guess. Gardeners are often grand, too, but so long as I don't want to plant any flowers, or do any watering, I've as good a right to be in my garden as they have. Garden next, please, since you say you're out to show me everything."

They took him first to see the semi-tropical gardens on the slopes and in the pockets between the rocks which looked towards the south and the sea. Not feeling sure of the effect which the College of Via Pacis in the midst of his property might have on him—others had been deterred by it—Mr. Lorraine wished to influence him as favourably as he could before they came upon the disturbing element.

His attitude was disheartening. He thought the efforts to attain semi-tropical effects very nice, but compared with what he had seen in Florida and California, the results appeared inconsiderable to him, though the cliff stairs down to the sea for boating and bathing pleased him.

But the garden in the ruins, with nice people sketching

and reading in it, to which Mr. Lorraine led the way diffidently, took his fancy mightily.

"There's nothing like that in all America," he said. "Just to think that you had those ruins there naturally, and did not have to put them up for the purpose! They accommodate the flowers just as how they had been made for it. It's fine, it is!"

"It was a waste of weeds and fallen stones when I came in for the property," said Mr. Lorraine. "But I had the weeds cleared out, and the stone-heaps turned to advantage by skilled gardeners, who knew the most effective things to plant, and the result is before you."

"Was it all some kind of building?"

"A church and a cloister."

"To do with that Abbot whose Lodge you spoke of?"

"Certainly—it was the Abbey Church."

"And where is his Lodge? You said that I could see it any time, and I should like to see it now."

"Why not?" said Grace, desperately determining to take the bull by the horns. "You'll probably like to see the Foundation, too."

"I'm sorry, madam, but *foundation* doesn't mean anything to me except a concrete bed for a house-frame. Is this some new kind of foundation?"

"No—a very old one. It began the way that all the old monasteries and colleges and almshouses began," said Mr. Lorraine.

"Oh, a sort of Rockyfeller *foundation*—a charitable *instiootion*?"

"Yes. You won't find it any nuisance," explained Grace, rather anxiously. "The ruins of the church shut it out completely."

"I shan't find it any noosance, ma'am, no how. I received my *eddcation* in an *instiootion*—it was hard times drove us west. Is that Abbot's place where the old things are part of it?"

"Yes, it's the Master's House. I'll take you across the court to it," said Mr. Lorraine.

He led the way out of the ruins, through an exquisite decorated arch in the north transept, which had been

hidden from their view by a pyramid of stones, from which tall flesh-coloured snapdragons were springing, like a cornfield ready for cutting.

"My, how fine! That's how I like flowers to grow!" said Mr. Ebbutt. "Something to cut at if you want to give a festival to a church, or a flower-day at a hospital."

"I agree with you," said Mr. Lorraine, "but we have the other kind of garden, too—as you see," he continued, passing straight out into the prim monastery garden of the great court, without pausing in the colonnade.

The herb-plots and rosemary-bordered rose-plots, radiating from the sculptured well-head of dark red sandstone to the dark red sandstone of the colonnades in the Italian style were sternly geometrical in their lines, though the effect was softened by the richness of the colour and the decay of the sandstone. But æsthetic nuances were not troubling Mr. Ebbutt. The great colonnade of round Renaissance arches, springing from slender columns, all in that deep red sandstone, had fascinated him.

"Mag—nificent!" he said, almost with bated breath. "What do you use it for?"

"This is the College I spoke of—behind the colonnades are twenty little houses made out of forty monks' houses. Each monk had his little house and garden in the monasteries of this Order."

"It was a pity that they weren't any use," said Mr. Ebbutt. "They must have had a lovely time. . . . What sort of people have you got to take their places?"

"All gentlefolks, who have lost their money, or not been able to make any yet, and all, as far as I could arrange it—though one or two others have crept in—people who derive the full benefit from such surroundings by spending their time in writing, painting, or composing."

"Real authors, artists and such people, or people who waste material and try the patience of their friends?"

The unexpected sally made Grace glance up sharply.

"I have suffered from them," he said. "We have a saying over there that if your watch tells you that it is nine p.m., you'll know that there are a hundred thousand people in America writing *pomes*—that is, verses—and

the amount of prime drawing-paper that was got through in a summer holiday before the Kodak idea came along—I say it was sinful, never having been in that business myself."

" You have been in business then, Mr. Ebbutt ? "

" Yes, sir, I was in a grocery and furniture business at Cin., Ohio, till I scrapped it to find the money to work my ' Commonsense China ' patent."

Mr. Lorraine did not pursue the subject. He was one of those old-fashioned persons who think it rude to be inquisitive.

" Might I be so bold as to ask to see one of their houses ? "

" Nothing easier—there is one in which the occupant who has been nominated has not yet taken up his residence." He led the way to the house which Rufus How was to occupy.

Mr. Ebbutt looked over its three bedrooms and bathroom upstairs, and its two sitting-rooms, kitchen and pantry downstairs, with deep interest.

Finally he said, " The kitchen and pantry don't seem to be fixed up quite equal to the rest ? "

" They're not for use," said Grace. She flushed as she had flushed in her room at the Manor House. Being boarded would be a cruel stab to her pride, though, after all, the American shopkeeper, who was almost a gentleman, because he was so frankly vulgar, whom they were trying to lure into displacing four centuries of Lorraines as Lord of the Manor of Via Pacis, had no idea that she was going to be a pensioner herself.

She explained that the pensioners all took their meals together in the Refectory, and that the cleaning and bed-making, though without any service or attendance, were performed by a staff of men and women servants, paid by the College.

" Service without servants of their own—why it's better than living in a hotel ! They don't have to think what the proper fee for each attention is, or to keep change of every size in their pockets ! "

" I'm afraid that the chief drawback of the pensioners,"

said Grace dryly, "is that their pockets are not of more use."

"I don't agree with you," said her father. "To live in an atmosphere of just enough comfort and consideration, without one thought of money, is 'The Way of Peace.'"

"I'm 'most sure that it is," said Mr. Ebbutt, "tho' I guess I won't try it till it comes along. That Abbot's affair—can we see it now that we have sampled this?"

"Sampled" gave Grace fresh horror, but she meekly led the way through the echoing colonnade to where an archway in the north side opened into the small court, made up of the Abbot's Lodging, the Chapter House, the Refectory, and the domestic offices.

Mr. Lorraine rang at the bell of the Lodging—the Master had the advantage of a servant to open the door and fetch and carry for him, since he could have his meals in private, but the servants of the staff tended his house like the others.

"Is the Master in?" asked Mr. Lorraine, when the old servant came to the door.

"Yes, sir," said the man, showing them into the guest-chamber where the Master received people.

Rufus How came in immediately. He shook hands warmly with his old friend and Grace.

"How," said Mr. Lorraine (and Mr. Ebbutt thought he was using an Americanism in the wrong place), "allow me to introduce Mr. Ebbutt, who would be interested to see your house, if you have no objection."

"None whatever, of course! How do you do?" he said, holding out his hand to the American.

"I'm not sure—you must excuse me, but I don't really know whether I'm standing on my head or my heels since I came to 'Yesterday'—you will excuse my saying so—that's what I call this place."

"It is The Past—that's the charm of it, when you get to my time of life," said the Master.

"Mr. Ebbutt wishes to see the Tudor furniture, How," said the Squire.

"Ain't this *Toodor*?" he asked, looking round the

room. "I thought that the whole of the Abbot's lodgings would be furnished with it."

"It would be a trifle too ascetic for anyone but a monk," explained Grace, feeling a slight in his words.

"Oh, same as the *Stooart* furniture! You'll allow we've made some improvements, then?" He always prided himself on his ability as a furniture dealer.

Mr. Ebbutt noticed the shrug of her shoulders, but only thought how pretty she was. He was disappointed with the hall—its stone walls and floor, divided by six feet of plain oak wainscoting, its heavy benches and forms, were too severe for his taste.

"Seems like it was meant for a school," he said. "Missy's room with the meeting-house windows is more to my taste."

"Well, we'll go back there and have some tea," said Grace, resolved at any cost to get him away from Rufus How before he made any more rough-hewn remarks. But her father remembered that they had not seen the Refectory or the Chapter House, which lay on each side of the vaulted passage by which they had entered the Abbot's Court from the Great Court.

In the Refectory there were the same medieval banqueting tables, with tops of two-inch oak, which they had seen in the Abbot's hall. These shone like mirrors, and were already laid for dinner. There were no cloths, but the cutlery and china were modern, and the forms had been replaced by comfortable chairs, made on an antique pattern, which did not jar with the surroundings. A place was laid for the Master at the head of one of the tables. He never took his meals in his house—he wished to be master of the servants, not the pensioners.

The place at the head of the other table had always been reserved for Mr. Lorraine, who dined in the Refectory frequently.

Mr. Ebbutt was open-mouthed with admiration, but he did not express himself as he expressed himself when they crossed the passage into the Chapter House, which had been converted into a library and a club-room, a sort of drawing-room lined with books, where people—ladies

more than men—smoked without asking permission. Its plain stone walls had been covered with oak bookshelves to where the open woodwork of the roof began, to the great advantage of their appearance, in order to take the ten thousand volumes with which Mr. Lorraine had endowed it, and in winter its stone floor was covered with a deep, comforting carpet. Comfort was its keynote. It had excellent club furniture instead of drawing-room furniture, and a pianola as well as a piano.

If people wanted to read in silence, they took the books away to their own apartments, or to the audit rooms, which opened off the Chapter House. It had been the late Mrs. Lorraine's wish that the Chapter House should be a Social Hall—an American term, which has no counterpart in English.

The whole idea and the way it was carried out filled Mr. Ebbutt's trans-Atlantic soul with joy.

"May I ask," he said, as he stepped out from the Chapter House into the passage, "whether that tower with the great wooden gate under it, is the real entrance of this . . . Foundation?"

"Yes—it's the great gate of the Monastery, the only way into it when it was built, for standing so near the sea, it had always to be on its guard against pirates."

"Now, do they use it still?"

"Yes, that wicket in the gate can be opened by turning the handle, from six a.m. to ten p.m.—after that you have to ring up the porter if you have forgotten your latch-key."

"You don't mean to say—a monastery gate with a latchkey? Not a Yale lock—don't tell me!"

"Yes, a Yale lock."

"I never! Don't the dead monks twizzle in their graves? You've got some hereabouts, I guess?"

"Plenty—there is a monks' cemetery in the field where the pigeon-tower stands, and we reburied twenty sacks of bones which had no gravestones when we turned the ruins of the church into a rock-garden. The few which had stones we reburied under their stones in the ambulatory of the cloister."

"I can't manage that word—it's too fierce for me, but

I know that it must be in the cloister, which sounds quiet. May we go out of that gate with the Yale lock and see how it looks from the outside ? ”

“ Yes, certainly. It’s worth looking at—I spent a good deal in restoring it to its original appearance. We use the old monastery granaries and store-rooms on each side of the entrance for our stores, which come from London by sea. There is enough water at our landing-stage for small steamers to come alongside at anything over half-tide.”

As they were passing out, he explained that the east side of the court was taken up with the kitchen and other servants’ apartments, and that they still used the monastery kitchen, with an open range specially adapted for the vast cowl chimney.

Mr. Ebbutt could not find the exact words, so he nodded and grunted his increasing approval. But the carefully-restored exterior was too plain to capture him so completely, until his eye fell on the scroll carved on the tower, under an enlargement of the great seal of the Abbey. On the scroll were the words :

“ THE WAY OF PEACE.”

“ I call that motto fine ! ” he said, using the word in the American sense. “ Where did you get it ? ”

“ It’s a translation of the name of the Abbey. You can see it on the arms—*Abbatium De Via Pacis.*”

“ Well, Mr. Lorraine,” said the American, “ if, as I understand, you have restored a ruined monastery into a home for ruined gentlemen and ladies, you have made it a way of peace, and done a very fine work.”

“ I think I have found the way of peace,” said Mr. Lorraine enigmatically.

“ You have indeed ! And say, Mr. Lorraine, I’ll take the property at your figure.”

CHAPTER XIV

HOW MR. LORRAINE BECAME MASTER OF THE FELLOWSHIP OF VIA PACIS

BEFORE Richmond Ebbutt left Via Pacis he begged Mr. Lorraine to engage all the servants to remain at a ten per cent. rise in their wages.

"They ought to have this bit more," he said. "It won't be like serving their old master."

He also unsuccessfully entreated the Lorraines to remain in the house as his guests, for a while, at any rate ; but had to be satisfied with their housekeeper, Rachel Bence, a Jewess of five-and-forty, who had acted as secretary to Mr. Lorraine and companion to Grace, and friend of them both, in addition to her housewife's duties. The post had been a well-paid one, and the Squire himself had urged her into retaining it ; he was unwilling to see her suffer from his speculations.

The new master assumed possession in a matter of days ; since they had only to walk out, and he to walk in, preparations amounted to almost nil. A hat-box and a couple of trunks sufficed to contain all the cis-Atlantic belongings of the man who had paid tens of thousands for the Via Pacis estate.

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As soon as Mr. Ebbutt arrived in his car, the Lorraines made their removal into their new home. They were only taking their clothes with them, and such things as they would have required for travel, and a very few keepsakes.

It was the more expeditiously done because everyone, male and female, who had passed from their employ to Mr. Ebbutt's that day, was anxious to lend a hand.

At dinner Mr. Lorraine took the Master's seat in the Refectory, but Grace made herself a cup of tea, which mingled with her tears, in their apartment. She was too sick at heart to eat anything.

CHAPTER XV

HOW GRACE LORRAINE TOOK HER POVERTY

THE Abbot's Lodging was none the worse for containing hardly anything but the old Tudor furniture of the hall, and the austere modern medieval furniture made to match it in the other rooms. But to Grace it was the abomination of desolation spoken of by Daniel the Prophet, after the crowded Manor House, with the collections of three centuries. She could barely do justice to the appropriateness with which the architect had restored and fitted the old house, which went back nearly five hundred years. It had been done regardless of cost, because it had happened to interest Grace's dead mother more than anything else about the whole foundation. Grace had always been deeply interested in the Abbot's Lodging as her mother's hobby. By all rights her interest in her new possession should have anæsthetized her sense of loss, but it happened rather that her sense of loss sterilized her interest.

And Mr. Ebbutt almost maddened her by the ignorance of the appreciation which he lavished on it.

His appearance also jarred upon Grace. Though he was always very carefully valeted, he wore black clothes as consistently as a clergyman. She longed for him to have some of Roger's ease, though she scolded Roger at times because he was hardly ever out of flannels, except when he was in evening dress.

She might have had many of the comforts of her old

room, for the Abbot's room, which she now occupied, was not inferior in size, and it was not going to be cold in the winter, since, like every other part of the monastery, it was steam-heated.

But her father had wished her to bring away nothing but her clothes and keepsakes and actual necessities—the rest he regarded as included in Mr. Ebbutt's purchase—so the room was very bare, and the fourteenth-century oriel window, headed with decorated arches, which looked so exquisite from the outside, had very small openings between its dividing shafts, and was so high up that she could not see out of it at all until she climbed up to the platform between the window-seats, to which fortunately there were steps up from the floor. This, again, being the only window in the room, was a good deal blocked out by the dressing-table, which her mother had had designed to go with a fourteenth-century room—a most inconvenient affair, which outraged history and common sense. And though the rectangular portions of the windows had been made to open like French windows, by substituting iron frames for their own lead settings, they did not give Grace the joy which she had found in flinging open the great windows of her old room, to look out upon the inlet and the giant capes and the Channel. The Abbot's oriel looked out on woods, which were turning sere, like her fortunes. She felt as if they would stifle her.

Her father slept in the little room next to hers, a cell once occupied by the Abbot's Chaplain, which also had a door opening into her room.

For *she* was frightened of ghosts in that house, and *he* rejoiced in the smallness and discomfort of the room.

He would have much preferred occupying an ordinary monk's house to being Master, and failing that, he wished to be as ascetic as possible in his personal habits, as a kind of penance for involving his daughter in his failure. He knew how he had stabbed her pride and happiness.

The discomfort of doing without a maid for the first time in her life was a penance to her, and a penance which she could have avoided if she would have allowed herself to use the services of old Martha, who had been her nurse

before she was her maid, and had insisted on accompanying them to the Abbot's Lodging, when a woman servant had to be appointed to take the place of the male fossil who had waited on Rufus How. Martha Golightly was determined that no one else should do the shifts and pretences for Grace in her poverty.

If Grace could only have been like her father, she could have eluded most of her unhappiness. He plunged into his new life with the zest of a man who had voluntarily given up his wealth to an Utopia, and wished to be a servant in the courts of his own creation. He tried to perform the duties of the Master of Via Pacis as he had conceived them, and really enjoyed the routine of the members of the College—the meals together, the meeting in the Social Hall of an evening, the being shown the work on which the various fellows of the order were engaged. He had now unlimited time for the walks with them and talks with them in their houses which had long been his keenest pleasure. Via Pacis, whose name was known all over the world to the people who were interested in literary and artistic and social movements, had been his conception and creation, and under the shade of this noble tree he was going to spend the quiet evening of a life which had begun in brilliant sunshine.

But *he* was in his autumn, and Grace was in her spring, and this Utopia had been his dream, while hers had been to choose with the greatest care the man who would be the ideal companion for her life out of the lovers who would be sure to present themselves for a beautiful girl, who was the greatest heiress in Devon.

To do this she had deliberately set a great price upon herself. She had been much more simple and friendly with the members of the fellowship than with anyone else. She had, in a general way, given up her mornings to the arts and her afternoons to the County, including Roger Wynyard.

Dressing for lunch seemed to transform her. The girl, who, dressed to be inconspicuous, spent her mornings in absolute freemasonry with the Fellowship, sketching, or reading or listening to compositions, in the afternoon

was the heiress, exquisitely turned out, reserved and fastidious to the pretentious, delightfully natural with her partners and antagonists in games, and apparently preoccupied with sport of one kind and another. To break the ice with Grace Lorraine the young bloods of the County had to be good sportsmen and good at sport, but beyond that they needed high qualifications, as they soon discovered. If sporting and personal qualifications counted, she could have wanted nothing finer than Roger, and his modest expectations formed no barrier, because her views on marriage were well known, as was his ill-success, though neither he nor she would have taken the public into their confidence on the subject.

The young bloods soon discovered that she was willing to receive a man as a friend, where she would not even contemplate him as a suitor for her hand. Brooke Sylvester, who was almost her father's age, was the only man whose offer for marriage she would have considered ; and he had no idea of marrying, having observed many unhappy instances, and being well satisfied with his own manner of life. He had travelled with the Lorraines sometimes, and he made every ancient city, which they visited, present all its antiquities, all its beauties, all its romance, to them, like an open book. He seemed to have immortal youth within. The beautiful Grace was his for the asking ; but he would never guess it, so, in her practical way, she was waiting until a better appeared.

In the interval there was Roger—Roger, who dominated her like a big brother, though his heart was her slave. It was Roger who went with her to parties, took what crumbs she chose to vouchsafe to him as a partner, was snubbed by her, maybe, not very mercifully, and in the end bade her come home at his discretion. She sometimes pleaded for an extension, but the decision always remained with him.

In the car he was just like a brother. She could lean against him if she was tired, or show him any little affection she chose. Nothing could make him try to kiss her when he was her chaperon.

It inspired her into being perversely affectionate, but

she appreciated his attitude, and it made her really fond of him.

And he, how well he was rewarded for his self-restraint ! It often made her tempted to tempt him. As the wise Roman said, everything was his so long as he did not take it.

Roger had more of her society than any other man. He was not one of those who enjoyed it because they were content to be friends, not lovers. He was a lover who would not take nay. But he was a lover whose declarations did not disturb the even tenor of their lives. He took his refusals like a "No, thank you," at tea, and put the proposal down like a plate of bread and butter.

And Grace did not fear Roger's proposals ; they only made her impatient. She never, for instance, forwent playing Roger against a troublesome admirer because it might lead to a proposal from the former.

Lord Dartmoor was a pertinacious admirer ; he could not imagine any woman rejecting a good-looking young man, with nothing against him, whose possessions stretched half across Devon, but he understood better when Grace showed an open preference for Roger. Roger Wynyard had been prefered before him at Oxford by men ; was it unnatural that their example should be followed by a woman ? Of the two she would rather go through life with Roger, concerning whom she knew the worst that would have to be known.

* * * * * *

And now Grace Lorraine, whose chief business in life it had been to winnow the aspirants for her hand, was an heiress no longer, but daughter of a pensioner at Via Pacis, with a few pounds a year of her own, which had been saved from the wreck of her American grandfather's fortune. This she had allowed to accumulate in the bank through which it was paid to her, since she had had such a large allowance lying to her credit in her father's bank.

Her attitude was not one of repining, but of anger with Fate, which had played her such a dog's trick.

Not that she regretted not having made use of her opportunities for contracting a wealthy and distinguished marriage. No one whom she liked well enough had asked her, and, poor as she now was, she would rather be what she was than linked for life to any of them. It was only that the whole thing seemed so unnecessary, that her father should have lost his money by speculations, when he had begun with so much more than he wanted that he gave away half of it to charity. He had not told her that he had speculated so as to be able to give more away to charity.

Grace Lorraine was cut off all round—cut off from the County by the loss of her father's fortune; cut off from her old friends of the Fellowship because she felt shy of meeting them under the altered circumstances, though she might have reflected that since she had always been as one of themselves in the days of her prosperity, she had nothing to alter in the day of adversity.

They on their part were hampered by delicacy. They had always felt her fraternizing to be the outcome of *noblesse oblige*; they had always felt her to be the heiress acting a part; and now that she had fallen, they still waited for her to make the advances. The only friends who seemed to come forward were the Wynyards, Mr. Sylvester, Hestia Myrtle, and some of those who had been compelled to retire from the Fellowship for success, and still lived in the neighbourhood.

The Count had flown back to London. He loathed the country and could not endure it one day longer when there was no heiress in the wind.

Roger was her great standby. He had the sense to be the brother and not the lover while she was so forlorn. Day after day he had been urging her to come and have a game of tennis, and to-day he was more urgent than ever.

“I can't—I haven't the heart,” she said.

“It is exactly the thing to give you heart. A girl who has been accustomed to games all her life can't suddenly leave them off without damaging her health and her spirits.”

"And it would be such bad taste, I think, now that I'm a pensioner."

"I don't see it."

"Well, I do."

"Then why did your father make a special set of courts for the Fellowship, if it isn't right for the members to play?"

She hesitated.

"Bernafay plays a lot, and Hestia plays a good bit, though she can't play for nuts; so why shouldn't the Master's daughter?"

"Yes, Hestia plays, and she's a busy woman, but I don't think she plays very much, and it's generally with the Count—an *affaire pour rire*."

"A how much?"

Grace took no notice of his interruption, but went on to ask, "Does she play when she comes to the Rectory for tea?"

"She isn't allowed to come. The mater is afraid of 'Eliza coming to stay' as a stepmother-in-law, or something."

"I wouldn't mind playing at the Rectory sometimes," said Grace, pursuing her train of thought without heeding Roger's indiscretions. "It wouldn't attract anybody's notice there."

"Come along this very minute!" he cried, slipping his arm through hers.

"Wait until I've fetched my tennis shoes, man!"

"Right ho!" he said, and started trying to mimic the faces of the pilgrims carved round the chimney cowl in the fifteenth century. Roger was a good mimic, and had a mobile, clean-shaven face.

Grace was some time in returning, and when she did come, he had the attitude and the face of the pilgrim so perfectly, that she burst into a really happy natural laugh. The curtain cord twisted round his waist, like the pilgrim's girdle, and the slouch into which he had knocked his Monte Carlo felt, to resemble the pilgrim's hat, completed the illusion.

"Oh, Roger, you are a dear silly thing!" cried Grace.

He noticed that she had put on one of her prettiest tennis kits, and otherwise taken care of her appearance, but like a wise man said nothing.

His mother noticed it too when they got to the Rectory, and were tautening the net.

The tingling of the blood caused by the strong exercise brought back to Grace her old desire for games, and she came to the Rectory nearly every afternoon ; and Roger, whether from his own happy-go-lucky nature, or from the definite desire to please her, was not the lover, but gave himself up to the enjoyment of playing games with her on the old frank footing, which always ended in such a cordial walk back to the Abbot's Lodging.

That was in the afternoon ; in the morning he used to have a bad half-hour when the only post of the day had arrived, bringing him no word from Rugby or Oxford or the War Office about his commission. It was such a humiliation to him to be hanging about home, playing games, when practically every soldier we had was across the seas, and every able-bodied man at home ought to be learning to drill and shoot in case of invasion. He could shoot, though he had never shot for Rugby or Oxford in his O.T.C. days, because he was always playing cricket in the summer term ; and he had been a sergeant, and knew a certain amount of drill. If the Government could not give him a commission right away, why could they not attach him to the local Territorials, and let him help to lick the South Devon yokels into shape ?

He often talked to Grace about it, when he went to fetch her down to tennis, so that the beloved need not carry her racquet and her shoes for herself.

Sometimes he talked of enlisting. But she protested vehemently against that. It would be such a sinful waste of national material to have Roger, a man born to lead and inspire as a Regimental officer, quick to see a crisis and meet it, sure of affection and obedience, vamped into a Tommy Atkins.

To think of such a man being an automaton under the orders of a crass sergeant, for there were such, or a toy officer, for there were such, was intolerable. No, he

must not enlist; he must just consume his soul in patience,

However despondent his mood might be on their walk, the clouds always cleared away when they settled down to their tennis. Singles they were obliged to play, since there was no one else of their class in the Fellowship.

CHAPTER XVI

HOW MR. RICHMOND EBBUTT WENT IN SEARCH OF THE MIDDLE AGES

IT was curious how soon, in a remote village like Seacombe, people settled down to their ordinary lives in the midst of the greatest war which has ever been waged. No one who had anything to do with the Fellowship enlisted, except Mr. Pennylegion, on whom the future had just dawned so brightly. Roger Wynyard, it was true, had at once answered the appeal to those who had served in the various Officers' Training Corps, and Lord Dartmoor had taken a commission in the Guards, though he was sent back by the Medical Board soon after he got to France as being totally unfit to stand the hardships.

Hardly anyone had gone from the village—there were few young enough to go, and the farmers and their men considered themselves indispensable in their own calling, even when they were doing milkmaids' work. There were no gentry in the village, except the Rector, and the artists, authors and musicians who had been Fellows of the Via Pacis Foundation, or had settled in the neighbourhood for congenial society, in such wonderful climate and scenery.

But just when Grace was beginning to feel normal again, the blow fell. Roger suddenly received his orders to join the O.T.C. camp in Kingsburgh Park, near London, and she was thrown back on her own resources. Once more she sat for hours at the piano, occasionally striking a few notes. She would not enter the Social Hall, or take her meals at the Refectory. She was out to nearly all callers. She

went nowhere but to the Rectory, and there very seldom, for Roger's ghost stood in her path. Mr. Sylvester was away in Italy conducting secret negotiations for our Government.

Mr. Ebbutt tried to rouse her from her torpor, when he met her at the Rectory, or when her father brought him to the Abbot's Lodging. But it was in vain that he told her that the whole of the Manor House was at her disposal, that she was to treat things as if they were her own. She could not be persuaded to go to the house ; she looked the other way if she was in any room of the monastery which commanded a view of it.

It was an unfortunate thing that she and Mr. Ebbutt should affect each other in such opposite ways. To him she was the most beautiful and "lovely" thing which he had ever seen. He determined to buy that house, whatever its drawbacks might be, because it had been hers, and was so full of her possessions and her personality. When he learned that she and her father would go no further off than the monastery after they had vacated the Manor House, he could hardly conceal his impatience to close the bargain. He was a singularly modest man. While he had been patiently compiling his millions at Cincinnati he had hardly been thrown into the path of elegant women at all. He had occupied himself night and day with planning the over-running of the United States and Canada with his "commonsense china."

When his great task was completed, he sold out to a joint-stock company, and turned his back on America. He wished to have a new life on earth, as well as in heaven. Above all, since everything had been new and hideous in his environment at Cincinnati, he meant to buy himself a house in Nuremberg or Oxford, or some such place, and try to picture himself back in the Middle Ages. What the Middle Ages exactly were, he did not know ; he had no notion when they began or ended ; he liked the expression "the Middle Ages." It was comforting to a middle-aged man that there was so much beauty and romance attached to the expression, and he liked the words connected with it, such as "troubadour" and "tournament," and

“knight-errant.” He had the ideas of a knight-errant himself, though he did not know it.

Nuremberg was soon ruled out—he could speak no language except English, and Oxford seemed to offer no opportunities to a millionaire, since none of the Colleges, or even Blenheim Palace, was for sale, and there was no other house in the place with a rent of two hundred a year.

So he went to the great estate-agencies, and no less than four of them told him that he might get the exact thing he wanted in the Via Pacis estate in South Devon.

These gentlemen were not guilty of intentional misrepresentation when they described the house as medieval. Not having taken their *Firsts in History* at Oxford, they did not know any more than he did that the illustrious monarch, King James the First of England, and the Sixth of Scotland, in whose reign the house was built, came to the throne a century later than the Middle Ages. And, at any rate, it was laid out on a medieval ruin, and looked out on one of the finest ancient monasteries in England. There was a splendid view of the great court and its colonnade and garden from the upper windows of the Manor House.

To Mr. Ebbutt the house was quite medieval enough, if he could buy it with all its contents undisturbed, as the advertisement stated; and that he was buying it from the descendant of the man to whom the estate was granted, and the man who had built the house, added greatly to its value in his eyes.

Mr. Ebbutt, with the elements of knight-errantry so strong in him, would have been deeply gratified if the Lorraines had gone on living in the house. It was amply large enough for all of them, and, as the descendants of Henry de Lorraine, they were the living counterparts of the original furniture.

It grieved him, more than he could say, that they would have nothing to do with the idea, that they would not accept the smallest favour, that they insisted on walking out with almost nothing but their clothes and their old letters. Being, however, a man who had triumphed over many difficulties by patience and humility, he hoped to

win his way to their sympathies. Grace's haughty courtesy, as she had accompanied him and her father about the house when he came to look over it, had fascinated him. He hoped some day to see friendship come into those proud eyes.

When he entered into possession, Mr. Ebbutt's hopes were raised for a little, because Mr. Lorraine considered it part of his bargain to show him every detail about the house and garden, and the Squire, in his relief at finding that the new purchaser was neither blatant nor purse-proud nor vulgar in anything but his appearance and his education, soon made a friend of him. But Mr. Ebbutt's hopes were dashed when he found that access to Grace was rendered not easier, but more difficult thereby.

She was horrified by her father having made a friend of a common American manufacturer, who had bought their immemorial possessions, and determined to offer a most strenuous opposition to any attempt which he made to draw her into the acquaintance.

When Mr. Lorraine had shown the American everything about the property which he had sold, he asked him if he would care to come and take coffee that evening in the Social Hall, so as to make the acquaintance of the Fellows of Via Pacis.

"I should like it fine! I want to get to know every one of them, as will allow me, as my personal friends, and I hope that they will make themselves at home up at the house, same as they did in your time."

He did not see Grace there when he arrived. He did not, however, expect to, although his eyes scanned every corner of the hall in quest of her.

Yet he did not know that he was altogether sorry, because he meant to talk sufficiently to make the acquaintance of every person to whom he was introduced, and if she were in the room, he would reproach himself afterwards for lost opportunities.

Mr. Lorraine, with his old-fashioned courtesy, was plunged into a fever of anxiety. He feared that two-thirds of the Fellowship would be insulted beyond forgiveness by Mr. Ebbutt's peculiar humour. But he was entirely

mistaken. Though he had been living with these Bohemians for twenty-four years, he had utterly failed to understand their standpoint, which was to welcome anyone who added to the gaiety of their lives. In Mr. Ebbutt they recognized a natural humorist. That they had in a kind of way been the victims of his humour, did not trouble them in the least. They hailed the introduction of such a humorist into the rather limited society of *Via Pacis* with something like enthusiasm. He was welcome to be witty at the expense of anything he pleased, if only he would be witty. Nor did the formality of his appearance, or his hopeless want of education, grate on them. These made everything he said funny, whether it was really funny or not.

The assemblage broke up with many manifestations of cordiality, and most of them invited him to come and see the results of their work, in some shape or another.

It took him a week of afternoon calls to accomplish this.

He invited them all to come to the Manor House every Sunday afternoon, with tea in the house or garden, as the weather might dictate.

Mr. Ebbutt had considerable qualms about asking Mr. Lorraine to come, and the old Squire had a very poignant feeling against going, but duty with him was always paramount, and he thought that if his presence did no good, his absence might do harm.

Grace not only would not go herself, but was furious with her father for going. She might have raised a more active opposition but for one thing: her father had talked of asking the Fellowship if they would object to having their afternoon teas served in the great hall of the Abbot's Lodging, instead of in the refectory, on Sunday afternoons, with a view to bringing the Master more in touch with the Fellows than the ex-Master, Rufus How, had been. At this function she could hardly avoid being present, so she was glad to see the scheme transferred, as it were, to the Manor House.

And it counted a great deal with her that Mr. Sylvester, when he returned from Italy, at once admitted Mr. Ebbutt to his inner circle. For easy-going as Mr. Sylvester was

about acquaintanceship, he was chary of wasting his time upon those who were not worth it. As a wealthy old bachelor, he had no one but himself to consult, and though his sympathies were broad his judgment was fastidious.

It was not until the following week that Mr. Ebbutt made his first appearance at the tea-table in the Abbot's Lodging. Grace was present, and had determined to be duly amiable. But her good intentions were frustrated by the oppressive shyness which Mr. Ebbutt felt in the presence of the woman for whom he had conceived such a passionate admiration. It was not love; such a thing did not enter his contemplation as applied to Grace—Dante did not put Beatrice on a loftier pedestal. And the pity of it was that she was so unworthy of it.

She was a very beautiful girl; she was very elegant; she had great feminine charm on the rare occasions when she chose to exert it, but her charm generally lay in a provoking fastidiousness. And there, apart from her intellectual equipment and her accomplishments, which were considerable, her good qualities ended, in the opinion of many. She did not know herself whether she was a nice woman or not; she often did not know whether she wanted to be nice or not on a particular occasion. She would let a man of sufficient power decide for her. A man who abased himself before her, like Mr. Ebbutt, awoke the wrong chords in her: he made her inclined to be rebellious, ungracious and ungrateful. If she found the right master, she might be all that a Prince could desire, but until the Fairy Prince came, the good in her would sleep like the beauty in the wood.

It offended her that the home of her ancestors should have been bought by a tradesman, who never wore sporting clothes except for fishing, and then did not have them at all right.

She hated also that the Squire of Via Pacis should be a man with an extraordinary accent, who tortured the King's English. Her ancestors had been men of distinction. Many Lorraines in the line of succession had sat for their County in Parliament.

Still, she smiled as she handed him his tea, and because

he was in love with the image he had created of her, he, the five times millionaire, the lord of the whole countryside, was grateful for the smile of condescension bestowed upon him by the daughter of the ruined squire, a pensioner living in an almshouse.

But though she smiled, she took no part in the conversation ; she left that to her father.

Mr. Ebbutt felt so oppressed that he did not venture on any of the homely scintillating truths which generally adorned his conversation, and which would have won him her ear more quickly than anything else, for the beautiful Grace could appreciate wit.

He said little ; he merely asked questions about the old house which drew long answers from Mr. Lorraine. Saying little counted for some merit in her eyes, though it did not advance him a snail's march.

CHAPTER XVII

WHAT MR. EBBUTT THOUGHT OF HIS NEIGHBOURS, AND HIS NEIGHBOURS THOUGHT OF HIM

AS the autumn advanced, in spite of his want of progress in the direction which touched him most, Mr. Ebbutt felt surer and surer that he had spent his money well. He had a beautiful house in a beautiful climate, and he had made the acquaintance of twenty or thirty very interesting families, who few of them seemed to remember that he was the dollar-bag who had bought their founder's estates when the crash came.

After the first formal round of calls, bringing them flowers or grapes had given him an excuse for looking in occasionally. This gradually gave way to more intimate reasons, when he had confided to the Rector that, since he was connected with the Fellowship in a way, he wished to buy paintings of the locality, and many copies of anything which had been written about the locality, to send to his business friends in America.

The pictures he hung in a building he purchased in the town for the purpose, which had been in turn a Non-conformist chapel and a cinema theatre. He intended in the following season to organize an exhibition of pictures by painters of the Via Pacis school, if he could get Angelo Fairfax, the R.A., and the other successful painters who had once belonged to the Fellowship, to send pictures.

The books about the locality were so few that he soon found himself buying books upon any subjects which had been written at Via Pacis. These books were invariably ordered through the Seacombe stationer, and Mr.

Ebbutt presented a copy of every book which had been written at Via Pacis to the little library which the stationer conducted, on condition that they should be kept in a separate bookcase, called the Via Pacis Library, and that every book which was lost should be replaced. This was to make the glories of Via Pacis known to the visitors who came to Seacombe for the bathing and the scenery in the summer, and for its mildness in the winter.

As he interested himself so much in the work of Via Pacis, the unassuming financier soon came to know the workers well, and was treated as if he were a member of the Fellowship.

The members went as freely to see him as he came to see them, but he spent the happiest part of his days in the monastery, where he could escape from the attentions of his servants, whose number and attentiveness oppressed him, after the greater simplicity of America. He had kept on all Mr. Lorraine's servants, except those who wished to enlist, and for these he arranged to keep their places open, and give them full wages while they were away. He did not fill their places, and was thankful for their absence, though that was neither here nor there.

But it was at the Rectory that he was most intimate of all. There was no one there who was personally to be benefited by the bounties of Maecenas, any more than Mr. Sylvester, so no shyness of any sort came in, and Mr. Ebbutt had been distinctly impressed by all three members of the family.

A new type to him was the well-off Rector, a great sportsman, still as active as a young man, though he was seventy, and with almost the position of a Squire in the County, who yet was so attentive to his duties in his parish, and to the remarkable Fellowship of which he was the resident trustee. The best testimonial to him, in Mr. Ebbutt's eyes, was that a Nonconformist chapel should have become a cinema theatre.

With Roger, until he had been called up to the O.T.C. camp, he was immensely impressed. He had watched him chafing at the delay in getting his commission. He had noted that he was obviously looked-up-to by every

young aristocrat in that part of Devon for his greatness in sport, and looked the equal of any of them in breeding. Mr. Ebbutt, with his American training, was astonished to observe that Roger, as far as he could make out, because he enjoyed a sufficient income to go about, had never thought of anything but sport until the war broke out. And he was still more astonished to observe that this doing nothing obviously enhanced his position, instead of stamping him as a wastrel, as it would have in America.

But Lady Cynthia Wynyard, the Rector's widowed daughter-in-law and Roger's mother, was his special friend. She saw all the goodness that there was in the shy, plain American, and could understand the great ability behind it, which had helped him to make his fortune. She forced him to come out of his shell when he was with her.

The society of this well-turned-out woman of the world, who retained so much of the elegance and good looks of her youth, gave him deep pleasure, because she made him be at ease with her, which was exactly the weak point in his relations with the beautiful woman who filled his thoughts. Why was Grace so determined to keep him at arm's length?

And Mr. Wynyard and Roger had been at as much pains to put him at his ease when they came to know the real man. But much as he was impressed with the young English sporting type, Mr. Ebbutt could not have helped being astonished if he had grasped how much of the cordiality with which he was received by the other great landowners in South Devon was due to Roger's simple dictum: "He's a good sportsman," and the brief explanation which might follow. Roger could assure them that he was a sportsman, for accepting the new Squire's invitation to show him what sport there was on the estate, he had noted the fineness of the tackle with which Mr. Ebbutt landed a good basket of heavy salmon-peel, though he was no shot. Mr. Ebbutt had, in fact, never done any shooting to speak of, but he had rented a salmon-fishing on the Metapedia a good many years before he turned his eyes to Europe. "And the shooting

does not matter, you know," said Roger, "because there'll be no shooting of game this year—except for the pot."

The founder of Ebbutt's, whose "Common-sense china" was used in almost every city and town in the United States and Canada (which Mr. Ebbutt called Canady), envied Roger more than anyone he had ever met—Roger, who would never make a competency in any profession—for the perfect ease and modesty with which he accepted popularity and admiration. It was a delight to him to be in the company of such a happy and natural person. But his American clear-sightedness told him that it was really a feminine gift in one who was, otherwise, so essentially manly, and strong and courageous.

Mr. Ebbutt got over his shyness sufficiently to call him Roger, when his friend flatly refused to answer to the "Mr. Roger" used to distinguish him from his grandfather. He often dined at the Rectory, and they often dined with him. Until he went away to the O.T.C., Roger shot the game for both tables, and he and the Squire fished together.

It was a great blow to Mr. Ebbutt when Roger went to the O.T.C. For in all the broad lands of Via Pacis, the two objects which gave him the keenest pleasure were Grace and Roger, the embodiments of adorable youth and of the aristocratic beauty, the perfect health and high physical training of the country gentry of England, the adventurous stock who have filled the waste places of the earth with Republics, Commonwealths, Unions and Dominions. Raleigh himself, the forefather of America, came from South Devon, from a Manor House but a few miles east of his, and the class from which he and this boy and girl sprang had paved the way in the wildernesses of three continents with their money and their energy, and often with their blood. When there were no wars to fight, the slaying of dangerous wild beasts in tropical lands, the handling of danger in sports for those who could not leave their homes, supplied them with their tests for courage and endurance. Courage and endurance were their gods. The spirit of the Race was in their charge. They kept its altars alight from one

war to another, while Kings and Governments, heedless whether the fire went out or not, maintained an empty ritual with political and diplomatic forms.

Mr. Ebbutt had yet to hear about the great Public-Schools of England, where the creed of the country gentleman is handed on from one generation of boys to another, as the code of chivalry. It would have given him food for long reflection to hear that the masters took a minor part in its propagation, though they enjoyed no respect from the boys unless they had been brought up in it, and, if they were worth their salt, accepted its decisions as reverently as the boys did.

And he would have been even more astonished at the omissions of the code (the code of a class born to rule, not to work for its living), which has not a word to say for learning, and hates industriousness like the very devil.

He had seen both aspects in Roger Wynyard. Roger was a *preux chevalier*, but he was only a drone in the community in times of peace, and his explanation of what he meant by a smug had horrified Mr. Ebbutt.

Yet Roger, a born soldier, so eager to fight for his country, so easy and courteous in his independence, and the aloof Grace, who would be so exquisitely beautiful if she could only be tender, had an extraordinary fascination for him, and Roger had gone, and Grace was implacable.

Even at the Rectory they did not seem to miss Roger as much as he did. Roger's mother, who was just his counterpart, was in reality devoted to him, but she did not expect that a boy like Roger would remain in a Devonshire village all his life; she always looked for the time when he would start on the great adventure, whatever form it took, and, secretly, she had chafed at his delaying so long in beginning this serious business of life.

Mr. Lorraine had been at the bottom of it, because he had secretly nurtured the wish that Roger should marry Grace, and stand in his shoes when he had gone. In that case, Roger's duty would have kept him at Via Pacis, looking after the estate, and nursing the division as a future candidate for Parliament. That Roger should devote himself to sport as exclusively as he devoted

himself to his garden and his hobby, did not trouble Mr. Lorraine. He thought that every man was entitled to his tastes, and he could trust Roger to behave in the handsomest way to his pensioners.

He did not wish Roger to go away because he thought that Grace might be snapped up in his absence, though few men would have a chance with him while he was there.

He had, as a matter of fact, ever since Roger had left Oxford, taken him almost as much into his confidence as his agent about every question in the management of the estate, with this in view, though he had not breathed it to Roger or anyone else—even Roger's mother. He knew Grace's perversity too well to let it pass his lips.

Roger's mother was an heiress in her way—the boy's income came through her. She was a daughter of one of the Devonshire Earls. Roger's father, who had died when he was a child, of a fever contracted while out tiger shooting, was just such another as his son. He was a soldier, who had been on the Viceroy's staff for his cricket. Roger did not go into the Army, because he feared that there would never be another war, and he believed that he would get into the Oxford Eleven. And his mother, knowing the pitfalls in the paths of smart soldiers, had been glad to acquiesce in his decision, though she disapproved entirely when, on leaving Oxford, he decided to go to the Bar, for which she knew that he possessed neither the brains nor the industry.

"You would make a much better clergyman, dear," she said. "You would have influence, and you would exercise it for the good, and you know how unfit you are for that."

"Don't be frightened, Mater—I won't try to be a devil-dodger!"

Lady Cynthia thought of her father-in-law, and laughed till it was plain where Roger derived that hearty, contagious laugh of his. There was nothing of the dodger about Harvey Wynyard. Character in different phases was equally the feature of all three inmates of that cheerful household.

Now Fate had solved her problem. Roger was to be a soldier like his father—but a soldier when soldiering was a reality. To the amazement of Richmond Ebbutt, the thought comforted her.

“I don’t hold with war at all,” he said, “and if I had a son I should do all I could to keep him away from it. The workers of the world—employers as well as employees—should join together and put a stop to it. But I applaud your courage, Lady Cynthia Wynyard.”

“We are Devons, Mr. Ebbutt, and we have heard Drake’s drums!”

“I know it, Lady Cynthia Wynyard, I know it! The whole British *airystocracy* have heard Drake’s drums. We Americans sometimes talk considerable about the shame of so much of the lands in the old country being held by people whose ancestors won them by the sword, but I guess we’ll never talk that way again, now that we’ve seen the way in which their descendants heard the call. I hear that more than fifty heirs of Peers have been killed. It seems to me that most every gentleman in England who is not too old or too young wants to fight, and a big few who are. There are times, begging Mr. Tennyson’s pardon, when simple faith like old Haldane’s, though they did make him a Lord for it, does not come in so handy as Norman blood.”

“I’m glad you think so, Mr. Ebbutt. We’re very proud of our Norman blood in Devon—I was born a Baskerville.”

“I love these young thoroughbreds like your boy and Miss Grace, Lady Wynyard.” Mr. Ebbutt saw no difference between *Lady Wynyard* and *Lady Cynthia Wynyard*.

CHAPTER XVIII

GRACE LORRAINE'S FIRST STEP TO FORTUNE

IN one respect the stars in their courses seemed to be fighting for Richmond Ebbutt. Trezennor, the Seacombe bookseller, had been accustomed to sell the paintings of local scenery by the artists of the Via Pacis Fellowship to visitors. Mr. Ebbutt, when he came, had bought out the entire stock. This suggested a new avenue of profit—fresh paintings of local pictures could be unearthed.

One day, when Grace came in to change a novel—the library of the Social Hall did not stoop below novels by standard authors—it reminded Trezennor that he had no pictures by her in the lot which he had sold to Mr. Ebbutt, though she painted “very pretty” water-colour sketches. He knew this because he had framed them for her from time to time.

He did not mention Mr. Ebbutt’s name to her, because he thought she would raise the price at once if he did, but he said that if she wished to sell her drawings now, he was willing to buy as many sketches as she had ready at ten shillings apiece.

Grace, overjoyed at the prospect of making money by her own handiwork, brought him all she had, and received the money for them. Trezennor at once sent in word to Mr. Ebbutt that he had a number of new water-colour sketches of exceptional merit, which he could have for a couple of guineas apiece if he took the lot. The messenger who brought the note received orders to go and fetch them.

"Who are they by?" asked the millionaire.

The boy had not been instructed to make a secret of it, and replied, "Miss Lorraine, sir—her name is on them, I think."

"Oh, yes—G.L." Mr. Ebbutt examined them with immense interest because they were by her. He withheld his decision until he had finished the examination, not because he had any hesitation about taking them, but lest he should give the boy (and through him his master) the idea that he made purchases without discrimination.

He had them all framed like a few which hung in Grace's *loggia* sitting-room, and when they were ready, hung them in the belvedere room over the porch, which had windows on three sides, and contained no pictures on account of the exquisite beauty of the panelling, by some pupil of Grinling Gibbons, whose work was hardly inferior to the master's. Since the reception to the members of the Fellowship when they came in on Sunday afternoons was always confined to the great suite on the ground floor, it was long before anyone in the monastery knew how he had outraged the seventeenth-century panelling and honoured Grace.

The one person who might have conveyed the information, his Jewish housekeeper, Rachel Bence, felt that to do so would be disloyal to her rough diamond of an employer, who had won her sincere esteem. For there were many things in his behaviour which showed her how much he was in love with Grace, and no one knew better than she did how it might defeat a plan of his, which she would like to materialize, if Grace heard about the pictures.

Jane Falcon, the hardy lady-artist who had given up a life of travel and interest to accept a *Via Pacis* pension for the sake of her blind sister, used to supplement her pension by doing paintings of the gigantic rocks at the mouth of the inlet for her old patrons. She was a slow worker, very sound in her technique, and despised the rapid sketching of water-colourists.

Grace was not aware of this. She only knew that

she was constantly out painting sea-pieces, and had the reputation of being very taciturn.

It was this reputation, perhaps, which made Grace confide to her, "I have sold all my sketches, Miss Falcon."

"Indeed! How much did you get for them?"

"Ten shillings each."

The uncompromising Jane thought that it was very good pay, and would have said so if she had had words to waste, but she confined herself to :

"Who bought them?"

"Trezennor, the bookseller."

Jane thought that Trezennor's head had been turned by success, but that Grace might just as well profit by it. She divided the world into artists, and conspirators against artists, who were therefore enemies. Her patrons were soft-hearted exceptions.

Finally she said, "You had better paint some more ten-shillings'-worths. I can show you good subjects. Will you come with me to-morrow? Start at ten from the porter's lodge, and take your lunch."

Grace was punctual; they spoke little on their walk to the Giant's Head, but when they reached it, Jane spent half an hour in showing her the finest points in the cliffs, and grew eloquent in her grim way.

Grace thanked her, and determined to sketch them all, as she had time. She did not work rapidly; her sketches were not free; they showed fidelity and some skill, but they had none of the inspiration of Tim Whibley's. They must, she thought, be good subjects for Trezennor.

She also contracted a liking for the society of Jane Falcon, who asked no questions and, indeed, initiated no conversations.

Trezennor bought the sketches and asked for more.

Painting gave her something to do, and took her out of herself. She put her best work into them. She saw little of Jane Falcon, who remained working in one spot, being engaged on a considerable picture.

CHAPTER XIX

CONCERNING HESTIA MYRTLE AND GRACE LORRAINE

HESTIA MYRTLE adored Roger Wynyard. She had seen not only the attractions which everyone who met him saw, the courage, the splendid strength and activity, the chivalry, the bonhomie, the child-like openness—she knew him as even Grace did not know him, though he was in love with Grace, and not with her, for he was in awe of Grace, and he was not in awe of her.

It was her own fault that he had made love to her, but to a woman of her attractiveness and brains and longings, *Via Pacis* afforded only a narrow vista. She had comfort and freedom from care, but she had very little beyond her pension of fifty pounds a year to spend on dress to set off her prettiness, and paying the visits to friends in London, which gave her the opportunity of buying her clothes and, to use her expression, were the only things that saved her from becoming a vegetable. When she went to London her money melted from her pocket. She had to rush about, not only to buy her clothes and see the sights, but to restore her tone after her long vegetation, like the man who went up to London to clear his system with a round of theatres after Lent. She did not care for the country; she did not care for country pursuits; she did not feel the need of country air and sights and sounds. She was a town-bird, who began to be thoroughly awake when she took her shopping walk before lunch, and liked to have one social

engagement after another for the rest of the day, including, if possible, a theatre or a concert. She liked a theatre best, though her *métier* was music.

For weeks after she had returned to Via Pacis, she used to live again those feverish days in London. They were life; the days at Via Pacis were a lotus-eater's slumber, but for one thing—the advent of Roger.

She first met Roger at tennis at the Manor House. She did not play tennis well herself, but she liked any kind of party. She generally, from a deck-chair, presided at the tea-table, to which people came for tea, and other refreshments, when they had finished a set. She munched chocolates, which were always an adjunct of the Manor House teas, and talked to the exhausted heroes and heroines. If she grew bored, she went into the drawing-room and played—she loved Grace's Erard. The resting tennis-players often followed her into the drawing-room.

Not so Roger; he was a school-boy about tea—he drank cup after cup, and he made cakes and chocolates disappear like cartridges into a machine-gun.

The day on which he first met Hestia, the other people who had been playing with him in the set left at its conclusion. Grace called out a sort of introduction as she was taking up her position to serve. It was not necessary: Roger's were not the kind of advances which any resonable person would repel, least of all Hestia. She saw in him the mixture of modesty and frankness which belongs to children; she read the charm of his disposition in his face, like an open book. And she had seen his smashing volleys. Hestia was no great judge of tennis, but she knew enough to appreciate *their* deadliness and brilliance.

So he took his seat beside her with something of a halo crowning his modesty, and his readiness to be pleased did the rest.

"How do you do, Miss Myrtle?" he said, raising himself in the deck-chair, since he had no cap on, when Grace "served" the introduction to them.

"Oh, I'm very well," she replied, "though I think I shall be ill to-morrow if I eat any more chocolates."

"I can easily stop that," he said, reaching over to the table to take the chocolate-box on his knee.

She grew alarmed at the way in which they were disappearing. "Stop! stop!" she cried. "I . . . I . . . I . . . want to be ill!"

"Oh, if you don't want me to finish them, I won't," he said, "but I'm not going to let you endanger your health. I'll take them to Collins and ask him to lock them up till this time to-morrow"—Collins was the butler. Roger marched into the house with them gravely, and returned without them. "Now thank me for saving your life," he said.

"I'm sure I shall do nothing of the kind—why shouldn't I make myself ill if I want to?" She pretended to sob.

"Because I've taken you in hand—I'm your trainer. You know what a trainer is?"

"A trainer? Do I?"

"Of course you do! If you're going in for a prize-fight, he's the man who prepares you for it."

"But I never should."

"That doesn't matter—he makes you observe the straight and narrow way in the matter of health."

She looked at him with the glint of mischief in her eyes, and said "Rats!"

The mention of that familiar quadruped made them friends for life.

He teased her as he would have teased a flapper, and Hestia was getting on for thirty. She did not resent it; she liked it. It recalled her days at the Royal College of Music, when she found herself the centre of cheap student gaiety in Chelsea. She had spent her whole capital on that course at the Royal College, and living expenses, and a brief period of happiness afterwards, and when it came to an end, she had earned a hard and precarious existence as a pianist at a cinema, and when her cinema hours were over, at late Bohemian parties, where she ought to have been in the thick of the fun instead of chained to a stool. She had been composing all the time, but it was only once in a blue moon that she sold a

composition, because no music-publisher will buy light opera music from an unknown composer, and no theatrical manager will use it ; they are slaves to names.

Therefore Hestia was only too thankful to be admitted as a pensioner at Via Pacis, where she had the leisure, which she found with such difficulty in London, for her composing, and could fill up the reserves of rest which she had been draining for years.

When Chelsea and all its fun were as far a cry as Loch Awe, it was a godsend to her to come upon Roger, just down from Oxford, a knightly person, full of monkey-tricks.

On that footing they might have stayed, but Hestia's nature craved for more. Actors are common in Chelsea, and where actors congregate, there are plenty of Christian names and kisses flying about. The lovely and high-spirited Hestia had not escaped their attentions. She had escaped with only one of their pitiful romances because she had her wits about her, but she had drunk deeply enough from the Circean cup to desire the affection of a man she admired, and Roger was of too affectionate a nature not to respond.

Had Grace allowed herself to become engaged to him, he would not have lifted an eyelash in any other direction. But Grace would not be engaged to him, and refused to believe that she could ever contemplate him as a husband, and though she did not know that Hestia let him kiss her, was glad that he should be attached to Hestia, because it gave her some respite from his proposals of marriage. If he had become engaged to Hestia, she would have been honestly glad. She did not want Roger for a husband herself ; she wanted him for a friend. The desire for a lover had not yet been awakened in her ; her test for a husband was, how would she like him to take the place of her father ? She would, of course, like him to be an Apollo in youth and good looks and fastidious habits, but he would have to be a man of as many interests as Mr. Sylvester.

Roger was so chivalrous about placing women on pedestals that nothing short of downright provocation

would elicit advances from him. Hestia was not dis-couraged. She had let men kiss her because they wanted-to. This man should do it because she wanted him to.

The first opportunity came when they had both been dining at the Manor House, and Grace had asked him to see Hestia home. The moon was shining, and she said, "The night is too nice to go straight from one hot room to another. Have you got to be in by any particular time, Master Wynyard?"

"Oh, no! The grandpater leaves our front-door un-locked all night. Seacombe's not out of the Golden Age yet."

"Let's go and listen to the nightingales by the Holy Well. I want to write a nightingale song."

"You can't go there in your best evening slippers—the grass will be sopping with dew."

"I'll take them off. I love walking barefoot on the wet grass—are you afraid of the wet?"

"I?—no, I've got boots on. The road up from the Rectory is too stony for pumps."

At the stile which let the Lorraines out from the garden to the wood, she sat down and drew off her slippers and stockings. Poor as she was, she always wore silk stockings and costly and delightful slippers.

She gave Roger a look which said, "Will you carry them for me?"

He had wanted to offer, but felt bashful. Finally he did offer, and they started into the wood.

It was brilliantly lighted by the moon; there was a path to the spring, but there was grass as soft as velvet on each side of it, and she loved the kiss of the dew on her white feet—they were of that ivory white which few but the women of the South attain, and the ankles which she displayed as she caught up her skirts from the damp were beautifully turned and slender.

The Holy Well was a pool, covered over with a vaulted chamber, and fed by a spring whose waters issued from an arched holy-water stoup in the wall.

Beside the well-house was one of the broad seats, with a low back and arms, of an old Italian pattern, which

Mr. Lorraine had had copied from the Borghese Gardens for his grounds.

"Let's sit down here and listen for the nightingales," she said.

"Won't you catch cold with those pretty feet of yours all bare and wet?"

This was a highly poetical speech for Roger, and she noticed that he said "pretty," but she answered him quite plainly, "These things never affect me—I'm as hardy as a savage."

She guessed the effect of this boast on an athletic man like Roger.

"By Jove!" he said. "You *are* a ripper!"

"Am I?" she said, looking at him with mischief in her eyes.

The moonlight was shining so brilliantly that he could see it as plainly as if it had been midday.

"Hush!" she said. "Now listen."

After they had been listening for a little while, the sonata of the woods began. She leaned towards him, and put her hand on his shoulder to warn him that it had begun, and kept it there to chain him to silence.

Roger listened without a word to the whole sonata, from its first warblings to the triumphant organings of its climax, but his arm stole round her waist, and she yielded to it. He drew her closer to him and listened on. He could listen like this for a long time, though a few minutes satisfied his curiosity as to nightingales.

But when he looked at Hestia her face was transfigured. She was drinking the beauty of that song to the bottom of the spring, so that its inspiration might well up in the nightingale song which she was writing. The inspiration had made her face more beautiful than he had ever seen it before. He gazed into it almost reverently.

At last the song stopped, and the rapture on her face broke into a smile.

It was a short-lived smile, for she felt his lips laid on hers, and made no attempt to defend herself. It was the climax of all others to the intoxication of the last half-hour.

It was she who was the lover. One moment she wished that he could have put some fire into his light and playful kisses ; the next she liked him all the better because he did not.

In truth, Roger's heart was Grace's, and he could not simulate love for anyone else. Kissing such as he gave was only a form of ragging—or friendship—which was it ? It cemented a friendship, in any case. It bound him to Hestia as he was bound to no other woman except Grace. Nor was he forgetful of Hestia's interests, for though he would have liked to have sat there half that moonlit summer night, he rose after they had listened to one more nightingale sonata, and escorted her back through the Manor House stile, where he dried those beautiful feet and ankles with his handkerchief, with a fine delicacy and tenderness, but without a word or a glance of admiration (for which again she blessed and cursed him), and busied himself with hunting a glow-worm while she drew on her stockings and slippers. And he went on hunting his glow-worm until she called “ Roger ”—she had never addressed him by his Christian name before.

Then he came back to her, and took her through that church rock-garden, where the stocks on the walls were awake, to her little house in the great court, which was full of the incense of roses, with the same matter-of-factness as if they had gone straight from the Manor House door to her own.

“ Come in for a few moments, won't you ? ” said Hestia, quite reckless as to how the proceeding might undo all Roger's elaborate precautions on her behalf.

“ No, thanks. I don't think I'd better,” he replied, just as he would have said it if he had brought her straight from the Manor House. He was, moreover, vexed with himself for having yielded to the temptation, and he did not wish any comment on his going into Hestia's house so late to reach Grace at a moment when he could not have swept it away frankly.

Hestia tried to put what she felt into her handshake when he said good-bye.

From that day forward to the day when she had saved

his life by giving the alarm to the lifeboat-men, their friendship had increased and ripened. Hestia, with her raven hair and glowing cheeks, was a lovely woman, and the mouth which he had been privileged to kiss was a rose with warm human petals. And if her figure was not as tall and beautifully-carried as her rival's, it was dainty and full of soft grace, and she had the fine art of dressing well on a little.

Having now taught Roger that he might kiss her, she saw to it that he did not lack opportunity.

To some men, if they had been as much in love with Grace as Roger was, it would have been impossible to go on kissing Hestia.

Roger had no such feeling. He had plenty of nice girl-cousins on his mother's side—My Lady this and My Lady that—and he had not left off kissing them when they left off being children. Therefore he was accustomed to being on affectionate terms with nice women. In fact, since Grace was so intractable, it was natural for him to associate affection with friendship rather than with love.

But though he only gave Hestia affection, she gave him love. Roger, big, strong, handsome fearless, careless, good-natured, was the type of man she had always been prepared to worship, and when once she had been petted and caressed by him the conquest was complete. She was ardently in love with him. She knew that she could not have his heart, but it was a great consolation to her to have his caresses, his playful love-making, which came to so little more than ragging.

And being in love, by the instinct which human beings share with animals, made her so lovely when she was in the society of the man whose lightest touch thrilled her, that if he had not been protected by the *robur et aes triplex* of his adoration for Grace, he could not have remained insensible.

Hestia was a good sportswoman. She had not meant anything serious when she determined to make Roger kiss her. It is not every kiss which has serious consequences in Chelsea. Hestia had been kissed by many men without losing her heart to any of them. The old phrase, kissing

goes by favour, as she interpreted it, meant that a kiss willingly given is a great mark of friendship from a woman, though it may only be a dissipation to a man.

Now that she knew that his heart was Grace's—he had told her himself one day, in a fit of self-reproach—she was so sorry for him at Grace's not smiling on his suit that she longed to win Grace for him, so dear was his happiness to her.

"Grace," she began, one day not long after Roger had gone away to his training, "I know why you're so unhappy—I'm sure that you refused him before he went, and that now you're devoured with regret."

Grace was so long in answering that Hestia said, "Don't be offended—I'm so fond of both of you that I should like to bring you together."

"I wish it was that—it would be so easy to repair. I should only have to wire my change of mind to Roger, and all would be right. The trouble goes deeper than that, Hestia. I'm eating my heart out with regret for the narrowness of the life which stretches before me. Even when I thought that I was going to be very rich all my life, I was depressed by the thought of the future, for I had to marry to give heirs to the estate, being the last of my race, and there was not a man who had ever shown the slightest sign of wanting to marry me who would not, as Roger would say, have 'bored me stiff' within a year. And the matter is worse than ever now. As a great heiress I had many offers of marriage, and had the chance to pick and choose. Now, when I want some rich man to marry me and take me away from the scenes which are so painful to me, nobody wants to marry me, except the faithful Roger."

"And Mr. Ebbutt."

"Mr. Ebbutt! Even more impossible! And I am sure that nothing is farther from his mind."

"Why won't you marry Roger?"

"Think how unhappy we should be! Even if they kept Roger on in the Army, his income and his pay together would never be enough to keep a house on, if we had any family, while his mother and grandfather are alive. I should be slaving and saving all my life, entirely dependent

on Roger's companionship, because we could not afford to go anywhere or do anything beyond garrison teas and tennis parties—and I might not have time for much even of them, having so much to do in the house. All my leisure time would hardly be enough to give Roger a little of my society."

" You'd find that this would make up for everything," said Hestia, judging by herself.

" But what time should I have for thought?—I've always thought for an hour or two a day ever since I left school."

" Thought!—what about, Grace?"

" I think about a lot of things."

" Do you mean Plato and evolution and all that sort of stuff?"

" Yes, all that sort of stuff—and Art and History and Antiquities, all the things you think about when you are travelling—reading generally."

" Roger wouldn't want to waste time on that sort of thing, certainly—he'd find it more relief to go to a cinema."

" And that and having babies and working and economizing are to make up life for me?"

" I'd welcome it."

" I'd rather die an old maid in an almshouse as I am now. We, at any rate, have time to rest, and time to think, and refined surroundings. I have learnt the beauty of my father's scheme by sad experience."

" And I have had an awful lot of pleasure out of it. But I sometimes think that it's only a licence to be selfish—that we are as lazy as the monks were. You can't pretend that it is better for me to be composing songs that won't sell, and therefore never seeing life, than it would be for me to bear children by a strong, healthy father, for the nation which is losing so many of its best every day!"

" There are plenty of potential mothers, Hestia, who desire nothing better."

" But you and I, who have alert brains, as well as healthier and better nourished bodies than a large percentage of them, ought to produce a higher type of children for the State, men better qualified to be inventors, and the

age of inventors will begin when the war is over, because the struggle of military inventions has been so intense up in the air and down in the sea and in our arsenals."

"I daresay you're right, Hestia, but I can't do it. I belong to the old order, which will fight to the last ditch rather than lose the dignities which it has inherited. I cannot tell you what the crash caused by my father's speculations means to me. I would rather have died than live to see it. I would commit suicide now if it was not a sin, and for the blow which it would mean to my father."

"He bears the blow like a man. Why don't you follow his example?"

"Like a man! Do you call his smiling accommodation of himself to the change from Squire to almshouse-person bearing it like a man? I think that he's positively happier just pottering round as he does now. It's a terrible lapse of dignity, terrible!"

"Well, I can't see it. There are only two things in life, duty and happiness. It is not everybody who can want to do her duty—that's a special gift of Providence which I don't enjoy. But we can all want to be happy, and happiness is the greatest thing of all. Other people's happiness as well as your own. Now, your father has always wanted to do his duty, and always thought of the happiness of others—for instance, of all of us—so you ought not to grudge him his own happiness, when he has suffered one of the greatest blows which any man could suffer."

"I know I ought not, but I can't help it. I throw back to my ancestors of the age when fighting *à l'outrance* was more highly esteemed than resignation."

"And all this time there is Roger. Won't you make up your mind to give him happiness, if you can't have it yourself?"

"What right have you to interfere with my private business? How do you know that I care for him at all?"

"You can't help caring for him—he's such a ripping man. Besides, I wasn't thinking of your caring for him, I was thinking of how much he cares for you. And everybody in Seacombe-cum-Via Pacis, knows that."

"It is very impertinent of them," said Grace, not knowing what else to say. "Besides," she continued, as an idea struck her, "if I did marry him, I should be so unhappy that I should warp even his happy nature."

"How could you be unhappy with him?"

"Because," said Grace, with considerable intuition, "I should have to be working nearly all day, and he would expect me to spend my hard-earned leisure in hanging round him."

Hestia knew how true this was, and reflected with bitter irony how gladly she would do it if she had the chance.

"Oh, well, she said, "I don't think you realize that it's war time."

"Unfortunately, I have only too good a reason for realizing it."

CHAPTER XX

CONCERNING AN OFFICERS' TRAINING CORPS AND A MUSICAL COMEDY

INSTEAD of equipping the O.T.C. to which Roger was attached, in Kingsburgh Park, with a Commandant and staff calculated to get the best out of a number of high-spirited young fellows from the Public-Schools, and with deft handling to develop the highest *esprit de corps* out of men inspired by the Public-School code, they had a red-tape Commandant, as stiff as his legs, and drill-sergeants who were fitter to train East-end hooligans than gentlemen. Bullies without imagination, their real interest in their work was to try and break the spirit of every gallant gentleman who came under them by metaphorically rubbing his nose in all the drudgery of the Tommies' course, which was the first part of the training.

Any sergeant in the London Scottish would have made a better Commandant for the Kingsburgh O.T.C. than Colonel Herring did.

To Roger, good natured as he was, and willing to go through any hardships to serve his country, the life of the O.T.C. was especially revolting. The sleeping on planks or on the ground was not the burden of the flesh to him which it is to so many men of the upper classes ; nor was washing in the open, almost stripped, for he was naturally hardy as well as a good sleeper. The mixed society did not annoy his easy-going, philosophical temperament—and some very queer civilians had been selected, by goodness knows whom, as suitable for training into officers.

It naturally gave him no pleasure every morning to roll

up the bottom of his tent in a particular way, bring out his bedding for airing in a particular way, lay out his kit for inspection in a particular way, and so on, down to the polishing of the buttons, but he meant to do it cheerfully, smartly, and really efficiently, to show that he could and would do it as well as he had done other things to which he had directed his energy, such as cricket.

Yet Sergeant Lepper always addressed him while he was doing it as if he was the most obstinate, insubordinate, churlish man, and the biggest fool, in existence. The sergeant never opened his mouth without oaths and threats.

It was always, "Wynyard, damn you, look alive! None of yer skulking with me! If you don't bustle up, and stir your adjective carcase a bit more, I'll . . ."

Everything Roger did was found fault with. That it was done with absolute injustice signified not at all.

There was nothing to find fault with. Roger, having been a sergeant in the O.T.C., both at school and at Oxford, knew most things about the work before he joined the Kingsburgh Park Camp, and his sportsman's eye made him particularly neat in making the end of his bedding dress exactly with the line, and keeping the bedding itself exactly at right angles with the line. It was quite a picture of neatness and good dressing. But when he had done it, Lepper would come along and kick it up, and tell him to do it again, with every other word an expletive, just because he hated Roger for being a man of such superior breeding, from whom he was unable to extort an answer back.

The food rations, which were liberal, were spoilt by bad cooking, but no objection was made to such of the victims, as could afford it, having their dinner at a hotel in the town, and Lepper was unable to worry Roger into any protest which could be made the pretext for confinement to camp for insubordination.

Although they were so near London, they had to be in at an hour which prevented their going to a place of amusement on any night except Saturday, or Sunday when they were all shut. This was galling, but Roger saw the sense of it, because in time of war, when boys

are training as hard as they can to become officers, it does them no good to be hanging about London at night. But the effect of it was tiresome, because it reduced one's amusement after a hard day's work to dinner and billiards at the Kingsburgh hotels, or seeing drivelling American humour at the Kingsburgh cinemas.

This did not at first press hardly on Roger, because billiards was one of his games, and playing a few hundred up after dinner, before an audience of appreciative fellow O.T.C.s, gave him both pleasure and renown.

But a new factor was to enter into the situation. A future was beginning to dawn on Hestia, through Dal Dryander, who owned and constantly occupied the largest bungalow in Seacombe. He had in his not very distant youth been a member of the Fellowship of Via Pacis, and had been so enamoured of the boating and bathing and fishing facilities, that when he became prosperous and had to give up his pension, he always came back to Seacombe for his holidays, and as soon as he could afford it, built a bungalow there, to which he was constantly adding. His prosperity had been unbroken.

When penniless and hardly more than a boy, his brilliance as an organist won him his pension at Via Pacis, and a small extra stipend for playing the harmonium in a chapel. He practised his playing diligently, and tried his hand at all sorts of musical compositions. A rich musical agent, whose patronage of Seacombe as a watering-place had been the means of introducing young Dryander to Mr. Lorraine's notice, had a plain daughter of about Dal's age, who was thrown into constant contact with him. He was the kind of man who has a great attraction for plain women—a good-looking fellow, with a high colour and curly red hair, and already, though so young, a picturesque red Bernard beard.

Max Rothenstein had no objection to him as a son-in-law. He was a good judge of men, and saw that Dal had the right qualities for a successful musical agent, with a good knowledge of music and singing, so he gave his consent to the marriage on condition that Dal would leave Via Pacis and come into his office, which had a

musical-comedy and music-hall clientele—the placing of music being quite as important a branch of it as the placing of singers, on account of the exclusive songs of music-hall “stars.”

Young Dryander soon found his opportunity. While still organist at *Via Pacis*, he had perceived what admirable popular songs could be made by transposing hymns, and had tried his hand at it. There he had no means of disposing of the songs, and no great knowledge of popularity. But now, when so much of his business lay in selling songs to music-halls, he knew exactly what sort of thing was most saleable, and devoted his leisure to re-coining hymns. Then he began to use his power as an agent. He pushed the “stars” who sang his songs ; his songs became what the public wanted ; their prices went up by leaps and bounds, and he soon began to grow rich.

He never relaxed. As one of the most popular doggerel-music-writers of the day, who could put his own vulgar words to the songs, and was therefore independent of the writers of popular words, he could now exercise great influence on the “stars” themselves, and carry them with him.

When he heard that a well-known music-hall proprietor was going to turn one of London’s great exhibition halls into the largest music-palace in the country, he went to him and made it perfectly clear to him that the only way for him to command the chief singing talent and most popular music for it was to make Dal Dryander manager. Yankee Smith had no objection to a Dryander combination. He had a far higher opinion of combinations than he had of Art. And from that time forward Dal Dryander’s three businesses of music-hall manager, musical agent and composer, formed a *Pactolus* with their mingled streams.

Dal liked Hestia Myrtle, if the truth was known, much better than he liked his wife, but, so far, his admiration had been of an unobjectionable and hospitable kind. She had the run of his house and was the favourite of his wife and children. He himself had not shown his hand. He had not seen what line to take up, though,

as Hestia was a clever composer who could not find any purchaser for her productions, a line of influence was in front of his eyes, if he had not been too selfish and self-satisfied to perceive it, and this though he often heard the songs in the musical comedy which she had written when she was singing them to his children, and liked them well enough to hum them. It never struck him that anything good could come out of Galilee. In his business he had got to the stage when he accepted songs not for their music, but for names of favourite music-hall composers.

Lately he had achieved a fresh distinction which he had long coveted. He had received a commission to write a musical-comedy, but as he had been constantly writing songs for the various revues produced at his music-hall, he found that he had run dry of melodies sufficient for such an extended work. He was not the man to give up a contract, apart from the conviction which he had formed, that the public was bound to tire of revues sooner or later, whereas musical-comedies would go on always. In his difficulty, he thought of Hestia. Her musical-comedy, he knew, had some excellent and catching melodies in it, and though he had never tried to help her for her own sake, while he was aware how she needed the money, his mind turned to her readily enough when he was himself in a hole, and he patted himself on the back for his desire to help her.

He did not offer to attach her name to the production, even in combination with his. He told her, in fact, that it would prevent his getting the contract. It might have done so, but he did not make the inquiry. He told her in advance, and as she made no objection, the work was published as Dal Dryander's.

In one matter he over-reached himself. He had not sufficient confidence in the music, not being his own, to induce him to offer her a sum of money for it, down. He suggested instead that she should take a share in the royalties. By "share" she understood him to mean half, and she told Mr. Skewen, Mr. Lorraine's lawyer, so.

Mr. Skewen, who was attracted to her because she was

the only brilliant woman from Bohemia whom he had met, and he craved for some foil in his Puritan life, said, "I'll draw up the contract for you, free of charge."

"Oh, no," she said. "Mr. Dryander might not like it. It'll be all right—I shall have to leave it to him."

When he protested that if things were left in this way, they generally ended in the deaths of friendships, she said, "Well, you talk to Mr. Dryander about it."

The composer was not very pleased about the arrangement being the subject of a legal agreement, and did not like it at all when the lawyer said that he understood that the royalties were to be divided equally. But when he found that the cat was out of the bag, and that Mr. Skewen was aware that "The War-workers" was in reality Hestia Myrtle's music entirely, and that all he was going to do was to give it his name and adapt it to stage requirements, he saw that no objection could be sustained against the suggestion.

"Mr. Dryander, you could not offer her less—especially since she is a personal friend of yours!"

So the agreement was drawn for half royalties, and Hestia was almost bewildered to discover that since Mr. Dryander had stipulated for four hundred pounds on account of royalties—which he had not mentioned to her—and since half the royalties were to be hers, her lawyer had received a cheque for two hundred pounds. It was a mere chance that Mr. Skewen was sufficiently interested in theatrical business to know that advances were usual in these contracts, but, knowing it, he insisted on including it in the agreement.

Being in possession of more money than she had ever had before, Hestia at once went up to London, and established herself in charming rooms, not in London itself, but at Kingsburgh, which is only half an hour by car from Charing Cross.

There was method in her madness. Kingsburgh was just far enough off to secure her from her Chelsea friends, with whom shillings were sufficiently scarce to make the railway fare an obstacle, and she did not want them running-in on her at every hour of the day and night. At

the same time, it was within easy reach of the theatre, where the rehearsals were going on, and not too far for more important and busier people to motor down to see her.

But the main attraction was, of course, Roger. She knew how early he had to be back at night, from a letter which he had written to her when he first went there—the only one he had managed, so far—another reason for wanting to see him.

It was one of the best moves she had ever made. Private Wynyard, 1250, Officers' Training Corps, Kingsburgh Camp, S.W., was just in the mood to be cheered by the news that one of his greatest friends had come to stay in Kingsburgh itself, so that he could slip in whenever he was off duty, and had nothing to do.

“Whenever you are off duty and have nothing to do”—he read it out to himself two or three times. It sounded too good to be true. But “Yours, Hestia,” was certainly in her handwriting, and he promptly sent her a wire from the camp post-office that he would be round at such a time to take her to dinner, somewhere in the town.

In the interval, Hestia was preparing herself for a shock. It would be dreadful to see Roger, who always wore such rippling tweeds and flannels, cut by the best Oxford tailor, and so exactly right, as she now pictured him. For the vision which rose before her was of a Tommy, in shoddy and ill-fitting khaki, stained by the arduous duties he had been called upon to perform, in service boots which looked as if they had cost about ten shillings a pair, and other horrors.

The figure which arrived looked so like an officer's that she thought that her eyes were deceiving her. His own Oxford tailor had made his uniform, of officers' cloth, with his usual success in fit, and the boots, though they were in imitation of a Tommy's pattern, must have cost him at least fifty shillings at his own bootmaker's. Imitating the smartness of an officer is no crime in the O.T.C. Even the “Leper” did not dare to go beyond swearing about it. Roger, looking, as it were, the show Tommy of the British Army, was a fascinating creature.

Hestia lost her heart more hopelessly than ever.

It tickled her wayward fancy to go and dine at a Kingsburgh Hotel with a Tommy, to be seen walking about the streets with a Tommy, and to go to a cinema afterwards with a Tommy. She hoped that some of her friends saw her. It would have tickled her a good deal, even if Roger's appearance had been as she feared, but, with such a very special Tommy, it made her feel quite brilliant.

When the Tommy ordered champagne—he remembered Hestia's fancy—the waiter, now Swiss, stared. Yes, he thought, Roger's clothes showed him to be something special. Living at Kingsburgh, he thought he might be one of the Tecks. He had not kept a very particular account of the family. He was, no doubt, setting an example. It was not for a Swiss, whose nationality was open to doubt, to worry himself about such matters.

Roger was adorably attentive during dinner. It was such a treat to him, as he said, to have something to "spread" himself over. They prolonged the dinner to such a late hour that they had only been in the cinema a few minutes when he discovered that he must fly out at that second, and run all the way to the station, where he would be sure of getting a taxi, and taxi to the camp, bribing the man to go beyond the speed limit, if he intended to get in by the hour laid down. He would have been disposed to sit where he was, and chance whatever punishment he might get, if there had been any chance, but he knew that his enemies would take the opportunity to confine him to camp for a week, and he was not going to run the risk of being deprived of the society of Hestia for seven mortal days, when he had only just recovered it. Hestia was not the kind of woman to resent his sudden departure. For two pins she would have run with him to the station. She made him promise to dine at her lodgings on the next night, and she intended to make him do it every next night, except Saturday and Sunday. It meant such a saving of time.

Roger's taxi bowled into the camp just in time; there was not above a minute or two to spare. But on the

way he made an enemy more virulent, for he passed the red-faced Colonel Herring, whose nickname in the Camp was "The Bloater," walking, very hot and exhausted, and did not offer him a lift, knowing that it would just make the difference to his being in time or not. He felt that he could not trust such a rag-bag of red-tape to protect him from consequences if obliging him made him late.

Roger dined with Hestia on the intervening nights till Saturday, when, being able to sleep out of camp, he arranged to give her dinner in town, and take her to the *Gaiety* afterwards. He engaged a room at the *Louis Philippe Hotel*, so as to be as near her as possible. He was going to breakfast with her in her rooms.

She tried hard to make him take her to one of the Italian restaurants in Soho, where it had been her ambition in her student days in Chelsea to have one dinner without economizing. But Roger was firm—nothing short of the *Savoy* would satisfy him. And he explained to her, with some reasonableness, that it was not very easy for a Tommy, with his meals found in camp, to spend three hundred a year. So she suffered gladly.

In her student days she could never dream of the *Savoy*; she merely thought that she would rather go there than go to heaven.

They had not seated themselves in their stalls at the *Gaiety* very long when a gorgeous young Staff officer—an altogether superb person—came in. He was alone, and it was not the first time that he had seen that piece at the *Gaiety*. He came in at the further end of their row, and stalked along, without looking to the right or left, in unconscious grandeur. He stopped next to where Roger was sitting; Roger had deposited a pound box of chocolates on his seat. He was so absorbed in Hestia that he did not notice that the seat belonged to the Staff officer until he was waiting to occupy it. He rose to salute and apologize, and removed the chocolates.

When he spoke, the effect on the illustrious person was electrical.

"Why, Roger, old man!" he said. "To think of meeting you here in this absurd kit! It is an O.T.C., I

see—that's not quite so bad. But why didn't you work a commission direct?"

"Tried to and couldn't, sir."

"How bally rotten! But don't call me 'sir' in the theatre—of course you wouldn't have saluted if you hadn't had to apologize?"

"I don't know," said Roger. "They rag me so at that confounded O.T.C. that I don't know what my rights are!" Then, relapsing into the easy familiarity which was far more consonant to him, he said, "But, I say, Dartmoor—you know Miss Myrtle, don't you? You must have met her at the Lorraines'?"

"Of course I have. I was trying to place you as I came along—you used to run the show, Miss Myrtle—play the accompaniments, make us shut up if we got out of tune, when we had a sing-song."

"If you promise not to tell anybody, Dartmoor," said Roger, when he and Hestia had shaken hands, and talked a little, "I'll tell you something very grand about Miss Myrtle."

"Mum's the word," said his lordship.

"Well, Miss Myrtle's got a musical comedy *accepted and being rehearsed!*"

"That puts the lid on! I shall hardly dare to talk to you after that—I have the very highest respect for musical comedy! 'It's my form of Art,' I used to tell Miss Lorraine, when she was ragging me about not taking an interest in anything but sport. I am very musical in that way. Is your musical comedy going to be given under your own name, Miss Myrtle?"

"No," said Roger, lying hastily and sublimely, "she wouldn't allow it—it wouldn't do, you know."

"No, of course not," said Lord Dartmoor; "it would bring a whole lot of chaps like me round her."

"That would be dreadful," said Hestia, so seriously that he thought that she meant it.

To relieve his crestfalleness, she said, "I'm not afraid of you alone, Lord Dartmoor. If you'll choose a day next week to come and dine with me at six-thirty . . ."

"Six-thirty?" he said. "Don't you mean lunch?"

"It's the hour at which his country requires Roger to

dine, if he's going to have any time afterwards before he has to get back to camp."

"Oh, well, I'll come! I'd dine with you before breakfast if you asked me!"

"What I was going to say to you was that if you would choose a night next week to dine with me at that unearthly hour, at Fleurdelys House, Kingsburgh, you'll find Roger there too, and I'll play you some of the songs out of my musical comedy. It's called "The War-workers," and all the parts are going to be filled by girls—except just one or two of the leading ones."

"Why can't I have one of them?" he said. "I'm not such a very rotten amateur actor—I belong to the Old Stagers'."

"I'm sure that we should be only too delighted to have you, if your King and country can spare you."

"That's just it," he said. "What's the matter with Monday?"

"Monday'll suit me all right."

"Then Monday's the day."

"Couldn't you let us hear the other show now?" said the "nut" who was sitting next to Lord Dartmoor on the other side, and was getting rather tired of their animated conversation.

"Pardon, I'm sure," said his lordship. "When you've been to the piece as often as I have, you'll know that this part isn't worth listening to."

The "nut" seemed to think this a perfectly good explanation, and transferred his attention from the stage to his toes, with gloomy resignation.

But Hestia said, "He's quite right—I don't want to miss a word of it. I'm not so *blasé* as you are, Lord Dartmoor."

* * * * * * *

Roger taxied her back to Kingsburgh, after the performance. He did not want to waste time on one of the tonsured suppers of the war: he much preferred sandwiches and a thermos of coffee at Fleurdelys House. And he did not hurry over them. Hestia's rooms were on the ground floor, so he would not be disturbing irate slumberers. Hestia

was a beautiful woman, and she had listened to the nightingales with him on that night in June.

* * * * *

Roger was not very sanguine about the Sunday, considering it from the point of view of finding gaieties for Hestia. For a person who does not play golf, there was no point in taking her to Ranelagh so late in the autumn, and *Albert Hall* concerts were not in his line, and he could not think of any friend who was a member of Prince's to give him vouchers. He did not believe her protests that she would rather be shown the camp in the morning, and spend the time quietly at Fleurdelys House in the afternoon, than do anything else.

The evening was simple—he wanted to dine at the *Carlton*, and taxi her back to Kingsburgh in time for him to return to the camp at the regulation hour.

She would not hear of it. "We should have to leave before we'd finished our fish, to make sure of your being back in time. We'll dine at one of the Kingsburgh hotels—I couldn't give you a decent dinner at my place on Sunday night, or I'd ask you there."

The "Leper" was hanging about when Roger took Hestia into the camp. Roger purposely did not see him. The "Leper" noticed it, and seeing the hated Roger with such a beautiful and dainty woman fanned the flames of his fury. He determined to revenge himself.

Roger thought no more about it, and left the camp as soon as he could, thinking it must be a very dull place for Hestia. He was rather glad that she had said that they should spend Sunday afternoon in her rooms, because he wanted to hear the best tunes in her musical comedy played two or three times over, so that he could catch them, before Lord Dartmoor heard them. He used to stand over her while she was playing, with the air of a person who was going to turn over the leaves of her music for her. He was so stupid about music that he never knew when he ought to turn over, but this did not trouble him, because he did not stand there with any idea of turning over leaves, but to play with the little jet curls which lay on the creamy nape of her neck.

CHAPTER XXI

LORD DARTMOOR INTERVENES

PUNCTUAL to the minute, Lord Dartmoor's car pulled up in front of Fleurdelys House. He found Hestia in great distress—Roger, who, now that he knew that Fleurdelys House possessed a telephone, had a great deal of use out of the camp telephone, had just 'phoned that he would be unable to come, because he had been confined to camp, for an imaginary misdemeanour which he explained.

Hestia told Lord Dartmoor what had happened as well as she could. He told his car to wait, and went to ring up the camp. He asked for Private R. Wynyard, No. 1250. He was told that they could not send for a private.

"Give me the Commandant, then," he said.

"Who are you?" came the not very civil reply.

"I am Lord Dartmoor, private secretary to—"; he mentioned the name of the General Officer in whose department the O.T.C. came.

The clerk at the other end of the telephone was too ignorant to know that this was the case, and said that the Commandant was out.

Lord Dartmoor, being a very spoiled young man, was unaccustomed to being crossed by subordinates, and, asking Hestia to put back dinner for half an hour, got back into his car, and proceeded, much beyond the speed limit, to the camp, where he desired to see the Commandant.

The Commandant was really away, and the officer who received him, awed by his uniform and his title, flew off to find Private Wynyard, whom, for some to him unin-

telligible reason, Lord Dartmoor wished to see, in the absence of the Commandant.

Their meeting was, of course, very formal, but walking him out of earshot, Lord Dartmoor saw at once that Roger had been confined to camp by the Commandant on a trumped-up charge made by a jack-in-the-box subordinate.

Individual action like this is hard to reverse, and Lord Dartmoor did not attempt to do anything for Roger in this matter. But he saw various people, and asked many questions, which convinced even a man of his inferior brain that there was something radically wrong in the management of this camp. When he had done this, he telephoned to Hestia, saying that it was quite impossible for him to secure Roger's presence in the absence of the Commandant, but that he would come back himself, and take a bite with her.

The tone in which he said it inferred that after a very hurried dinner he would return to town. But he did not hurry away; he took quite an ordinary time over his dinner, and stayed to hear her music before he went, thinking her a most delightful woman, and imagining that Roger was her fiancé.

He was right, however, in thinking that in helping Roger he would be obliging her.

* * * * *

Lord Dartmoor's chief happened to be consumed with the desire for efficiency, and hearing such a very unpromising report of the Kingsburgh O.T.C., motored down with him on Tuesday morning to look into things for himself.

One glance at the Commandant was enough for him. He saw that this important position had been entrusted to a gouty "dug-out," who, instead of bringing out the good points of the boys entrusted to this charge, would be likely to drive them into revolt. He saw that the non-commissioned officers "The Bloater" had selected for drill instruction and disciplinary purposes were more fit to deal with dockers than with Public-Schoolboys, who were exactly the right material for officers, and exceedingly

anxious to fit themselves in the shortest possible time, and that many of the other posts were as badly filled.

He gave the Commandant a brief notice of dismissal, and personally examined all the other officers, who would not be affected by the change of Commandant.

Finding one of them who appeared to have sympathy and insight, he inquired into the character of the sergeants who did the drilling and disciplinary work, meaning to warn the incoming Commandant that their cases must be looked into, if he did not, as he probably would, wish to appoint men of his own choosing.

Then the great man drove away, unconscious that he had been assisting at an act of poetical justice. For it so happened that Colonel Herring had not been satisfied of the genuineness of the charge preferred against Roger by Sergeant Lepper, but had allowed it to pass because he recognized Roger as the private who had not given him a lift in his taxi a few nights before. He confined Roger to the camp for twenty-four hours.

The great man, who had examined the Adjutant's notes, having observed that the case of Private Wynyard, which had caused his surprise visit, had been punished by a sentence which had already expired, did not go into that matter with him, but went into it very sharply with the Commandant, who ought to have looked into the charge with more intelligence and tact.

The Commandant and his sergeants went, and great changes were made in the staff, without Roger knowing the wherefore. He merely knew that the new men were much easier to work with, and taught him more, and went to his dinner undisturbed, to Fleurdelys House.

Hestia's love for him grew nightly, and so did his friendship for her, but he did not regard it as affecting his relations with Grace, for whom he still hoped, though he met with no encouragement.

So much in love with Roger was Hestia, that she determined to utilize her chance re-meeting with Lord Dartmoor to try and hurry on his commission. Love lent her eyes ; she detected the grounds on which she could accomplish her desire, and went to see Lord Dartmoor at his chief's office.

She could not get in to him ; he sent out a note which said that he was busy with his chief, and would be during all his office hours that day, but that if she would come to his house at 100, Richmond Terrace, just outside the War Office, during his tea-time, from five to five-thirty, he would give her a cup of tea and hear her business.

His chief, he knew, did not like ladies interfering at the War Office, and he himself was anxious to serve her for two reasons : he had conceived a great personal liking for her, and he was rejoiced to find Roger, as he thought, attached to her instead of, as he had supposed, to Grace Lorraine, to whom he felt more than ever attracted now that he could court her not as an heiress, but simply as the woman whom he loved.

" Well, Miss Myrtle, what can I do for you ? " he asked, when she was shown into his pleasant drawing-room, looking out on the river. " Has our friend been the victim of any more rough justice ? "

" Not in the sense you mean, Lord Dartmoor, but I came to point out to you that his presence at the camp at all can only have been the result of a mistake."

" If it is, we will do our best to remedy it."

" You are making him go through the training in the O.T.C. when he has already been a sergeant in the O.T.C., which ought to count."

" Where did he do it ? "

" At Oxford—he only resigned it a couple of years ago."

" And your point is . . . ? "

" That he has a right to be gazetted without the loss of time involved in going through the whole training again."

" That's a perfectly good point. If he sends it to me in writing, I'll lay it before the chief."

" But he could only do it through his commanding officer, who is hostile to him, and certainly would refuse to do it. The new man has not arrived yet."

" Ah, yes !—Well, when the new man does arrive, I'll tell him to make an inquiry as to whether there are any such cases in his camp. He'll then hear about Wynyard's case, and possibly others, and report to our office."

"Thank you so much, Lord Dartmoor."

"It's a duty as well as a pleasure."

* * * * *

The result of the inquiry was that Roger's case was reported, and he was recommended for an immediate commission, which was granted to him, in one of the Battalions of the East Surrey Regiment, quartered in the new wooden cantonments in Kingsburgh Park. Hestia remained at Fleurdelys House. It was obvious that she was going to make a good deal of money from "Mr. Dryander's" musical comedy, and there was no way in which she could derive greater pleasure from it than by remaining in the vicinity of Roger, while being in the London district was beneficial to her interests from the business point of view. Those who were in the know about musical matters were perfectly aware that the music of Dryander's musical comedy was in reality hers, that she had only collaborated with him so as to get his name and his stage experience for "The War-workers."

Roger came to see her very frequently, and there was no set-back of any kind in their friendship. It was so quiet and steady that it seemed as if it might go on for ever.

Nor did there seem any immediate prospect of his Regiment moving to France, but in December they received orders to mobilize directly after Christmas.

Roger, in company with half the Regiment, received leave to go and spend Christmas week at home. He hastened down to Devonshire.

Hestia, whose love had developed into a passion now that he was a full-blown officer, under orders for the front, did not go. She felt that she would see him again when he returned to the cantonment, and that she would rather not witness his pursuit of Grace if his love was unabated. He would certainly like her, Hestia, much better for sparing him embarrassing situations.

With characteristic generosity she wrote to Grace to express the hope that she would find it in her heart to accept Roger before he went to the front.

CHAPTER XXII

“ ADIEU FOR EVER MORE, MY LOVE !
ADIEU FOR EVER MORE ! ”

WHEN Roger reached Seacombe in the afternoon, he had tea patiently with his mother and his grandfather. He was too good a son to go and see Grace before he had done his duty at the Rectory, but his mother knew, without his saying it, that every minute of the time he was itching to get to Grace, however affectionate and unpreoccupied he might be.

Grace met him with a kiss, when he walked into their house unannounced, and slipped her arm through his when they went for a walk in the Abbot's garden.

Roger's personality had never possessed so much charm for her before. It was not only that he was much handsomer in his khaki Field Service jacket (the most graceful in its lines of all uniforms), and with his long wiry legs in admirably-cut cord breeches, and shapely brown gaiters, which shone like a mirror, though these had their influence on a woman with an eye for form.

It was more because she felt that Roger now was in his proper element, that he had, to adapt the Duke of Wellington's famous simile, been qualifying in the playing fields of Rugby and Oxford to lead his country's soldiers. She was only thinking of him, of course, as leading his company in a charge—Grace's mind did not picture larger military operations. Roger looked so tall, so strong, so resolute, such a successor to King Arthur's knights.

She gave herself up frankly to the enjoyment of his society, and, had he but known it, he might have kissed

her as he kissed Hestia, when they were sitting in Grace's studio, the room with an oriel, looking north, through which the Abbot had watched coming and departing cavalcades on the London Road. Like the other outward windows, you could only see from it by mounting the steps into the recess. Roger and Grace were sitting on the steps ; the room possessed no couch, and only one chair.

She was glad that he was going to the front. She would still have been glad if he had been her husband, and she had loved him as passionately as Hestia did. In war she felt it a reproach to have any man of hers, who was fit, and of the fighting age, in his home instead of with his Regiment. Both she and Lady Cynthia were true daughters of old medieval stocks, which expected their men to be warriors when they reached the age.

She was not growing sentimental about Roger. She was not comparing him in her mind to Guidarello Guidarelli, the Knight who lies dead in deathless beauty in the Museum of Ravenna, a statue which she knew and loved so well. He reminded her more of Sir John Chandos, the Knight of Crécy, whom Froissart pictures riding into all his battles with a smile. She thought at that moment what a good sportsman Roger would have been as a knight, how expert he would have been with his weapons, what a *preux chevalier* he would have been in his code. Yes, Roger was a born knight-errant—God bless him. But how intolerably slow it would have been to be a knight's wife in a lonely castle, with no excitement ever before you, except being captured, castle and all, while he was away ! She had often thought that her favourite Middle Ages must have been a poor time for women.

The week passed very quickly. It was delightful, having Roger about again all day long : Roger blundering in just after breakfast, Roger playing golf with her, in his uniform, minus the belts, so that nobody should think that he was not serving ; Roger in a changed uniform, a tunic of exactly the same pattern, but with slacks instead of breeches and gaiters, coming to fetch her down to dinner at the Rectory, or to share the pensioners' dinner

at the Abbot’s Lodging ; Roger mooning about their drawing-room, which was called the library, until it was time for her to turn him out ; Roger with his mind always concentrated upon her.

The wonder of it was that he had made none of his usual attempts to propose to her. She had so often thought that he was on the point of it, that she had turned over in her mind what she was to say to him again and again.

By the offer of one of Mr. Ebbutt’s cars, Roger was able to pick up the midnight train from Plymouth to London at Seacombe Road, which gave him until nearly midnight to divide between Grace and the Rectory on his last day at home. Every night he had had two or three hours’ talk when he got back to the Rectory, for Grace turned him out about ten o’clock, and to Roger bed before midnight was like lunch before one o’clock. Ten was the Rectory hour also for going to bed, but his mother was only too willing to sit up with Roger. She was not jealous of all the time which he spent with Grace : Captain Wynyard had done just the same with her, and she recognized the fact that a man in love, before or after marriage, belongs to the woman of his choice, and not to his mother or father.

When Grace was at the Rectory, which was very often, she generally made a point of keeping Roger with his mother as much as possible. Grace knew that Lady Cynthia wanted her to marry Roger as much as he did himself. If Roger had had his mother’s brains, Grace Lorraine might have been Mrs. Roger Wynyard before this.

And Lady Cynthia knew that she could do nothing to help her son ; she could only be a spectator and hope for the best. In point of fact, she did help him, by the fact that Grace looked upon her as a mother.

On that last night Grace dined with them at the Rectory. She was glad to observe that Roger, while his eyes were riveted on her, devoted most of his conversation to his mother, and that splendid old septuagenarian, his grandfather, who, if ever it came to defending their homes, would inevitably lead the forces of the village. The genial Harvey Wynyard had both body and soul of iron.

Their conversation was of the general, futile nature which distinguishes conversations when those we love best are leaving in an hour or so to go to the back of the earth, or the front of the battle.

The real things have been said ; the protagonists are merely exhibiting the British philosophy, which is only priceless in tight corners, where there is nothing left to do but to die well.

Nine and half-past had struck, and as ten struck Grace got up to go home. Roger, of course, was to escort her. It was wintry weather, and she had brought the big tweed coat, and the tweed hat with an eagle's feather, which she used when she was going to and from the golf links.

Half-way between the Rectory and the monastery was a hermitage, which Mr. Lorraine had had cleaned out, and fitted with seats, as a refuge from the weather, in case of sudden storms. Roger and Grace had often sat down to talk in it, and when Roger, who was carrying a fine electric torch, turned into it, Grace followed him meekly, though she knew that the dreaded and the inevitable must be going to happen.

Roger laid his torch where the lamp used to burn when the image of the Virgin filled the niche, so as to throw a light across the chapel just where the beloved would stand.

"I've brought you in here, Grace," he said, "because I wished to finish what I have to say without interruption. This is rather a critical moment in our lives, and I am going to be parted from you, for a long time—if I ever come back. Of course, I expect to come back—anybody who feels life so strong in his veins would. But one can't help facing the fact that an Infantry officer has rather an outside chance."

"Of course you will come back, Roger dear ! Don't talk like that," said Grace, prompted by a guilty conscience.

"Who knows ? I shall soon be in the hands of God, as old ladies would say—just as if one wasn't always in the hands of God ! "

"And I pray that He may take care of you !" said Grace devoutly.

"He ought to listen to my grandfather, if He listens

to any human being when He is arranging our destinies. But I would rather think like Henry Hudson than think like the old ladies.”

“What is that ? ” asked Grace. Even at such a moment she could hardly repress a smile at Roger’s having got hold of a literary tag which she did not know.

“Oh, just a thing which I heard my grandpater quote in one of his sermons. I daresay Hudson was a Devonshire man—most of the early navigators were.”

“Well, what did he say, Roger ? You haven’t told me that yet.”

“I don’t remember the sort of thing exactly, but it was when the mutineers, because they would not go any further, had turned him and his little grandson adrift in a boat on that sort of ocean which is still called Hudson’s Bay, that he said, as he was cast off, ‘We are as near God by sea as we are by land.’ And that is what I think about battles, Grace.”

“Dear old Roger, I’m sure you do ! It wouldn’t be like you to be afraid of anything that ever was created.”

“There’s only one thing that I’m afraid of.”

“And what’s that, Roger ? ”

“I’m afraid of being afraid. I hope to God I never shall be.”

“Of course you won’t ! You couldn’t, Roger.”

“I’m as near it as ever I was now—I’m afraid of saying what I want to.”

“You needn’t be—I shan’t bite you, even if I can’t do what you ask me.”

“That’s exactly what I’m afraid of. Grace, will you promise to marry me, if I get safe out of this ? ”

“Why need you put it like this, Roger ? Why can’t you let me part from you as your mother would part from you—let me part from you as the biggest friend I ever had, or could have ? On this basis you can be as affectionate as ever you please.”

“But I don’t want you only as a friend, Grace—I want you as a wife ! And it would be something for me to try and live for, if I am badly wounded, instead of wanting to ‘go out.’ ”

"What wicked nonsense, Roger! Fancy a man like you talking of wanting to die! It would be wicked and absurd even if I were married to somebody else! But I have never said that I wouldn't marry you—I've only said that I wouldn't marry you until I was sure that we could live happily for ever afterwards, like people in stories."

"It comes to much the same thing," he said gloomily.

"It doesn't, and you know that it doesn't."

"Then, why can't you promise, Grace?"

"How can I promise? How can I tell that you will be any better qualified to be my life-companion when you come back from the war? The odds are that when your life is full of serious things as well as sport, you won't have any room for the things which make up a woman's life."

"You are very hard."

"No, I'm not. Parting from you will be a worse sorrow than parting from any other human being except my father would be. And natural affection apart, it would be worse even than from parting from him. I love you, Roger, dearly, but I cannot promise to marry you, after the war."

"Oh, well," he said, "I suppose I had better be taking you home. There isn't any more to be said, is there?"

"I'm afraid not. But you aren't parting in anger, are you?"

"How could I part in anger from you? We're not parting for a few minutes yet."

As they left the hermitage she wondered why he had not taken her in his arms, and poured out the full measure of his affection for once. But partly he had no heart to do it, and partly he did not wish to do a thing which would make him miss her more poignantly afterwards, when he could neither see her, nor hope that she would ever be his.

They dropped into commonplace conversation about life at the front, as they followed the winding road up to the great gate of the monastery, where she outraged the dignity of the wicket by opening it with a Yale key.

The door of the Abbot's Lodging was always open. Mr. Lorraine came down the stairs as they entered, to say good-bye to Roger, but after five minutes of affectionate leave-taking, went up again to bed, imagining that his daughter and Roger would have much to say to each other before they parted. He was astonished when, a few minutes later, he heard the front door shut, and Grace come upstairs. He did not go out to speak to her; he thought that the moment might be too sacred.

* * * * *

Roger's good-bye had been of the briefest. Their hands met, their lips met in one long kiss, and then it was:

"Good-bye, and God bless you, Grace!"
and

"Good-bye—*bon voyage*, and safe return, Roger!" and with an echo of rapid footsteps across the small court, and the banging of the wicket gate to snap the lock, Roger had passed out of Via Pacis—perhaps for ever.

* * * * *

Roger did not allow the scene through which he had passed to shadow his last hour with his mother. He was his sunniest and playfulest with her, at heart unaltered since the days when she gave him his first lesson in cricket, while he was still in sailor suits. His type of man is always particularly dear to a mother.

So Lady Cynthia was torn between tenderness for the child, and the desire to see the man strike a blow for his country.

They spent a lovely hour together, in the closest communion.

"Roger," she said, "promise me not to expose yourself needlessly. If you are serving any military purpose—saving or storming a position, which helps to win a battle, take any risk, offer your life freely. But do not play to the gallery, with your life—that isn't courage, it's vanity."

"All right, Mater—I'm not out to win the Victoria Cross, if that's what you mean."

"I don't think I do mean that," she said, and she knew that he was belying himself, for of all men likely to dash out to save a wounded comrade, at any risk to his own life, her Roger was the man. "And, Roger, do write to me every day."

"I'll try, Mater, but that's the hardest proposition I was ever up against."

Then there was silence for a little. Presently she said, with a break in her voice, "Have you any last directions which you wish to give, in case . . . ?" Her voice faltered. "In case . . . in case anything should happen to you."

"Well, I want you to have all my things, Mater, except that I should like Grace to accept my ring, if she will, and I should like you to give my wrist-watch to Hestia Myrtle."

"To Miss Myrtle? Why, Roger? Of course I'll do it, but I don't understand why."

"Well, we've been great friends, Mater, for years, and . . ." he hesitated for a minute; he thought of saying that she had been very kind to him while he was at Kingsburgh, but a better reason flashed upon him just in time, which was no more the real reason than the other.

"You know, it was Miss Myrtle," he said, "who fetched the lifeboat-men who saved us, and Miss Myrtle who got my having to be at the O.T.C. squashed, and got me my commission."

"Miss Myrtle? Why, how on earth did she manage it?"

"She went and worried Dartmoor, who is private secretary to the General who is head of the O.T.C. business, and he got it put through."

"Lord Dartmoor?" said Lady Cynthia. "How did she get to know him so well? Of course, she met him up at the Manor House—I can quite understand that. But how did she get to know him well enough for this?"

It was hateful to Roger to have to tell half-lies to his mother, at what might be their last meeting, and he seemed to be plunging deeper and deeper, but consoled himself with the idea that it was kinder to deceive her than to

tell her the truth; it would be hateful to say anything which unsettled her at such a moment.

An inspiration saved him from telling her an exact untruth. He said, “She met him through musical-comedy.”

She did, in the *Gaiety* stalls, but that was not the sense which his words conveyed to his mother.

“You know that she has written a musical-comedy with Dryander, and that’s why she’s up in town just now”—Roger really believed this—“and musical-comedy’s Dartmoor’s weakness.”

“Oh, I see,” said Lady Cynthia. “She’s got into that set, has she, through her success? Well, I hope she’ll get out of it safely! She’s so lovely and so sympathetic that one can’t help being anxious.”

Roger pretended to scratch his head. He had done it since he was a child to mean that he was puzzled.

“I mean what I say, Roger—she’s just the sort of girl who—” Lady Cynthia’s pursing of her lips expressed more than she would have said in words. “I’ll send her your watch,” she said, “if anything should happen to you, and I hope that I shall not have to send it to her, for more reasons than one.”

The last moments were taken up with the mother’s care for her offspring. She entreated him, if he was sent out to storm trenches, to wear the cuirass, of small plates and links of hardened steel, which has so reduced the mortality among our Infantry officers.

“I couldn’t do it, Mother, unless every man in the Regiment had one—I shouldn’t like to be better protected than the others.”

“This is fustian, Roger—your men will be much more grateful for having one officer left to lead them, than for any chivalry of this sort. It’s the Government’s fault for not supplying them, and making their use compulsory. They would save at least half the casualties when our men are attacking machine-guns. The French have all sorts of contrivances of this sort, and that’s why their attacks are so much less costly than ours.”

“I quite agree with you, Mother—I think it’s rotten,

the Government not making the troops use body-armour where its use would mean victory instead of defeat. But until the Government give those orders, or its use becomes general, I couldn't use one."

"That's mere quixotism, Roger, when so many men in the Infantry do use them."

"I can't help it, Mother—I couldn't do it."

"Well, you will wear that Gieve waistcoat when you're crossing, at any rate?"

"No, I can't do that either, Mater, unless the others have belts of some sort."

"That's flat foolishness, Roger! Do you suppose any drowning man was ever consoled by the fact that all his friends would be drowned too?"

"I can only say the same thing over again—I think we ought all to have them, when there are submarines about. But unless everybody has them, I can't use mine."

"I knew you'd say that, Roger, but I hope that you'll think of your mother when the time comes."

"Let's talk of something else, Mater—we haven't much time to waste," he said. He had his arm round her, and was kissing her affectionately. "I'll tell you one thing before I go, Mother, which I think will please you. Do you remember that when first I went to school you made me promise that I would never tell a lie because I was afraid—that if it meant my getting a licking if I didn't tell one, I was to take it, unless I could fight for it? Well, Mother, I've kept my word—I never have told a lie because I was afraid."

But even while he was telling her, he knew that what he was saying was only true of being physically afraid. He had told her what were practically lies this very evening, so that he might not hurt her, and he must leave her with that lie upon his lips. Casuistry was to lie heavily upon his soul before they met again, if ever they met again.

The last few minutes before they said their words of farewell they passed in a silent embrace. Men like Roger express themselves best thus.

When they had said their farewells, the parting did

not come after all, for Mr. Ebbutt came round with his motor and begged Lady Cynthia and her father-in-law to go to the station with Roger. He himself, in the almost Arctic furs which he had worn in America, was going to drive outside beside the chauffeur, he said. He would have driven them, had he been able, to make the excuse easier.

Long as she lived, Lady Cynthia would never forget that race to the station, through the darkness, with obscured lights, up and down terrific hills, with Roger facing her, but hidden from her by the night, in the last hour which they would spend together for so long.

At the station the parting was an easy one; you cannot have a great emotion in the same degree twice. It seemed, when the London express from the West stopped at the platform one minute, to take up passengers, and Lady Cynthia hastily kissed her son, as he scrambled into the train, to go to the front, that she might be only seeing him off to Oxford, for the eight weeks of the term—they parted so cheerily, with such almost commonplaces.

CHAPTER XXIII

THE LOOSE END

ONCE in the train, Roger's cheerfulness soon evaporated. The other occupants of the carriage, observing the dejection which was creeping over his face, imagined that it was the parting from his mother, over which he had bluffed while she was with him to keep her spirits up.

But he was not thinking of his mother. He was thinking of Grace, whose pity he had refused. Why had he refused it? Was it anger or pride or scorn which had impelled him? He did not know, but instinct had made him refuse. And his leaving, except for that last hand-shake and kiss, had been almost like a quarrel.

Now he felt nothing but the bitterest regret that he had repelled the offered affection. Perhaps, while she was yielding to his kisses, the contact might have generated a wave of feeling which would have swept her off her feet, and made her promise to be his wife. Could she have resisted? If not, what had he missed?

And apart from the chance of overcoming the stubborn resistance of her mind, how often was he to regret in the lonely nights which were in front of him, if his life was spared, that he had cut himself off from the priceless minutes which he might have enjoyed, and treasured for ever afterwards as the greatest privilege of his life?

He cursed himself for a proud fool, who, because he could not have one forbidden dish, had refused a feast while he was fasting.

A calculating man might have judged that to accept the offer of friendship on however intimate terms, might be to accept his permanent relegation from the category of lovers to the category of friends. It was an old caprice of Grace's to say to a man—she had said it to Lord Dartmoor and at least a dozen others—"I could never contemplate marrying you, but we can be great friends if you are content to be no more."

But true as this might be, Roger was not a calculating man, and not a shadow of the thought had drifted across his brain. It was his pride, which she had outraged, which had made him refuse her offer so abruptly, and almost cut off their farewell. She had tried to buy him off the dearest wish of his heart with a mess of pottage.

And now, in his loneliness, as he sat in that railway-carriage, speeding through the gloom, through the Somersetshire vales, and across the downs of Wiltshire, it seemed to him as if he would have given all he possessed for that mess of pottage.

He had earned his own respect, it was true, but of what worth was his self-respect, when he had boasted to his mother that he had never told a lie, though he had been deceiving her but a few minutes earlier?

He reached London before daylight, before there were any taxis in the station yard, or within call of a whistle outside. When he had telephoned for taxis, without success, for half an hour, he sat down in the first-class waiting-room at the station, utterly bored and utterly "blue." There was nobody else in the waiting-room, and he had nothing to do but yield to depressing thoughts, to which was added the reflection that he had to report himself at the camp at eight o'clock, and there did not seem the least prospect of his being able to do so, even if he took a taxi the whole way, as he intended to do.

But at about seven o'clock a taxi crawled into the station, as limp as a casual who has been spending the night in the park, and the porter, who was looking out for one for him, came and fetched him.

He managed to report himself in time, but everything else went wrong. Both the Colonel and the Adjutant

were very cross ; half the transport and the stores, which were to accompany the Regiment to France, were not yet forthcoming, and the last drill had been held, and the men's kit had been packed and unpacked twice already, and there was nothing for officers or men to do, except bear the brunt of the Colonel's displeasure. But Roger was kept hanging about the camp until after six o'clock, when he went off to see Hestia, with whom he had not had one word all day, because he could not leave the camp, and the Adjutant had commandeered the Regimental telephone for conversations with the War Office.

The delay had not improved his spirits. It was not quite the usual Roger who turned up at Fleurdelys House at half-past six.

To add to his depression, the Adjutant informed him just before he left the camp that instead of their sailing to France on the next day, Saturday, as announced, the War Office had postponed their sailing until the following Saturday, and sent a battalion of the H.A.C., which had everything ready, in their place, and that as nothing was doing, he could have his leave extended for another week, if he kept in town, where he could be summoned on the telephone should the War Office change its mind.

He was just going to refuse—he had no heart for amusing himself about London after what had happened—when he recollects that if he could get leave for town, he could get leave for Kingsburgh, and that the best tonic for his sickness at heart would be the restful and sympathetic Hestia, who, if he did not feel inclined to talk, would play him into better spirits with the latest airs from music-halls and musical-comedies.

Once more he wandered into the domain of white lies.

“ Thanks awfully,” he said. “ I suppose it would be the same thing if I went to one of the hotels in Kingsburgh, wouldn't it ? I don't want to dissipate, so London wouldn't be much catch for me, but I may just as well have my last go at decent food and a decent bed.”

“ All the same to me, my dear Wynyard,” said the Adjutant, who had a great liking for Roger. Roger's anxiety to learn his work, and get into thorough touch

with the men, had been such an excellent example to the other newly-hatched officers, to whom his record in sports at Rugby and Oxford made him a shining light. It was because he knew his drill so well that he was offered another week; the backward boys would have to be drilled hard all the week to lick them into shape.

Misfortunes never come singly. Hestia, to whom he telephoned while the Adjutant was talking to some of the others about leave, had, so he learned from her landlady, gone out of town for the day, and would not be back until about eight, when she was going to have a high tea.

"What a beastly bore!" said Roger, forgetting that he was talking over the 'phone to a landlady.

The landlady, who had ample reasons for knowing what a friend he was of Hestia's, by the number of meals which he had taken in her house, and imagined that he was engaged to Hestia, suggested that he should take high tea with her. "I can do you a bit of fish and a chop, you know, sir, and you needn't drink tea."

"Oh, that doesn't bother me, Mrs. Hains. I think I will come. I'll just take what she was going to have."

Hestia, to her delight, when she got home found Roger installed in her sitting-room. The frank kiss, the giving him her wrists instead of her hand, yielded him a sense of having something still belonging to him.

"But, Roger, boy, what is the matter with you?" she asked, when the high tea had been discussed and cleared away. "You've left your conversation behind you in Devonshire."

He explained very lamely that Grace had put the same slight upon him that she had put on all her other lovers—and this on the eve of his going to the front.

"Poor old Roger! But I'm sure that Grace meant no slight. She was only trying to tell you that though she could not marry you, her friendship for you would be undiminished."

Roger refused to be consoled with reason, when he was haunted by the idea that by a stronger exercise of personality he might have borne down her resistance.

But Hestia did not intend him to spend the evening with remorse. She wished him to spend it with her, and Hestia was a countrywoman of Sappho, who had already given him all that love can without stepping over the threshold.

Hestia's soft mouth, Hestia's burning eyes, pleaded with him, as she stood before him, with her fingers resting lightly on his arms. She yearned instead of speaking, and it was yearning that he needed.

Presently he sat down on a big armchair, and drew her on to his knee. He did not kiss her; he seemed lost in thought. She sat quietly, touching him lightly with hand or lips from time to time.

All of a sudden he looked her in the eyes and said, "I know that I shall never be really happy until I marry you, Hestia. Will you marry me, little Hestia?"

"Oh, Roger, I can't."

"Why can't you, Hestia? Are you going to give me undiminished friendship? Don't you love me enough?"

"I love you more than anything in the world, but I can't marry you."

"Are you, too, afraid to go through life with me? Am I such an ogre?"

"I don't know what an ogre means, Roger. I shouldn't worry about it if I did. Unfortunately, I have only too good a reason for refusing you!"

"Are you engaged to someone else?"

"Worse than that—I have a husband."

"You have a husband?"

"Yes. I married a man who is now among our most successful actors. He was a king in our particular Bohemian circle in Chelsea. He was so witty; he danced so exquisitely; he had such a genius for getting up cheap revels; he was such a joyous, rowdy soul—the life of the whole circle. I can assure you that I was very much envied when he married me. I had just enough of my money left to give us a honeymoon and buy a few things for our lodgings, and he was generally in work, though he wasn't very well-paid in those days.

"For a few months he was good enough to me. He

enjoyed the excitement of being married to me, I suppose, for I used to be very pretty."

"Used to be!" said Roger, with a flash of his old boyishness, drawing her closer and kissing her affectionately.

When he let her sit up again she asked eagerly, "Am I pretty still in your eyes?"

"Of course you are, you jolly kid!"

The epithet was music to her ears, and it had its meaning, though it seemed an odd one to apply to a woman of her age.

"But go on: tell me about him," he added.

"I could see even then that the liveliness and rowdiness which made such good fun at a Chelsea dance might be distracting in a husband at two in the morning."

"If you had married me, should I have had to leave off larking and be serious after eight p.m.?" asked Roger.

"Oh, your fun is a very different thing to his, even in his best days."

"Did he go off colour like a Kodak film which has been kept?"

"It didn't take so long as that—our honeymoon was hardly over before he began to get tired of me, and then he made no further effort to conceal from me that he was a drunkard. He used to come home drunk every night. Sometimes he was profane; sometimes he was disgusting; sometimes he was violent. He was always horrible, and used to beat me because I could not sell any of my music, though I had fifty pounds when we married—it was all *my* money which we spent on our honeymoon."

"It's a pretty bad record, little Hestia."

"I wish it was the worst of it. It was not very long before my freshness for him was exhausted, and he got utterly tired of me. He hardly ever came home at all, and he gave me no money."

"The brute!" said Roger. "I should like to meet him—I'd hammer him to a jelly, no matter what I had to pay for the assault!"

"But you haven't heard the worst thing of all. When I told him that I must have money to buy food and keep a roof over our heads, he sneered, 'Well, you know how to

get it, though your rotten music won't sell. There are some people who would think you pretty, if I can't see anything in you ! ”

“ The skunk ! ”

“ After that I left him, and I have never spoken to him since.”

“ What is his name ? ”

“ Christopher Cadbury.”

“ Chris Cadbury ? I've seen that chap lots of times ! He's one of the chief favourites on ‘ the halls.’ He's awfully funny as a boozy man-about-town.”

“ Because it's himself, and he probably is half-intoxicated when he's doing it.”

“ He must be making a lot of money.”

“ He is.”

“ He must be spending it on other women, so it ought not to be very hard to get enough evidence to divorce him.”

“ The worst—or, I suppose I ought to say the best—of it is that he doesn't seem to care for other women any more than he cares for me. A stockbroker who wanted to marry me had him shadowed for a whole year in the hopes of my getting a divorce. But he doesn't seem to care for women at all.”

“ So you're a married woman, Hestia ? ”

“ Married nearly ten years.”

“ And you look like a girl of twenty-three ! ”

“ That's because I was born with a light heart. When the milk is spilt I make haste to forget it.”

“ Poor, pretty Hestia ! ” he said, kissing her mouth and her throat and her eyes, and playing with the elf-locks, which on her arranged themselves as gracefully as the tendrils of the jessamine.

“ She isn't poor—not even in the matter of money just now—but I like you to say that she's pretty, Roger.”

“ So you are, adorably ! ”

Roger spoke from his heart ; he was grateful to have some long-hallowed object of his affections still in being, now that he had cut himself off from Grace.

Gradually, he could not have remembered how, Roger fell to telling her about his life. Apart from its connection

with Grace, it was the story of a boy who rather enjoyed the smacks and setbacks with which he opened his career at private and public schools—at any rate, he enjoyed describing them—and who afterwards took a high place in the hierarchy of English sport. The interesting part of his life to Hestia was his patient siege of a woman who persisted in judging him upon his qualities and finding them deficient.

“ I have known Grace ever since we were little kids. I first began to love her when she was a flapper, with brown legs, ever so long and thin—from Easter to Michaelmas she only wore stockings in the house. She never wore a hat in those days, except when she went to town. She rode and swam, and managed a boat and played games, almost like a boy. I used to think her as good as a boy chum, and I was very particular about that in those days. She was so much a boy that she was as respectful to me as a boy would have been when I got into the School Eleven. So long as she had her skirts up and her hair down she was quite natural. She used to kiss me as a sister would kiss a brother, and welcome my company all day long, much more than I, a boy looked-up-to by other boys, ought to have welcomed her company.”

“ But you did commit that hideous wrong ! ” said Hestia, who was always highly amused by boys at the age when they speak of themselves as Eton and Harrow “ men.”

“ Yes, and it is due to this, I suppose, that my dismissal was so long postponed. We had been such friends that she simply could not dismiss me like the others.”

“ But when she put her hair up, she terminated the old boy-and-girl friendship ? ”

“ Not exactly ; we continued to be constant antagonists or partners in games, and while we were playing, she was always just her old self. It was when we were doing nothing, and I was trying to persuade her to marry me that she turned queer.”

“ So you, like the rest, found her wayward ? ”

“ No, I can’t say that she was wayward, if I attach its right meaning to the word. I found her very hard and unchanging. I loved her so much that I tried to get her to

promise, whenever she was in the mood to let me talk at all. Sometimes she silenced me right off, but because we were such tremendous friends, she was generally willing to silence me with arguments, not orders. As a rule, she divided my sins into two classes—what I did and what I didn't do."

"And what were the sins which you did?"

"Nothing—that was the chief trouble—I did nothing but amuse myself."

"And what were the sins which you didn't do?"

"Not taking an interest in the things they do at Via Pacis."

"Surely she couldn't quarrel with you over that?"

"No, I don't mean that she quarrelled with me because I did not go into the houses, one by one, and ask everybody what they were doing, but the sort of things which go with the people at Via Pacis—the reading, and the painting and the music, and the talk about the monastery and the ruins—what I call talking like a book."

"Well, you aren't very topical or lucid, Roger." As she got the words out slowly, her right hand was playing affectionately with the well-ordered hair of the offending head. "But I suppose that what she was arguing to you was, that as the literary and artistic side of life—and travel and all that sort of thing—meant so much to her, and you were unable to get up any interest in them, you would not be much of a companion for her. Some women want intellectual companionship from their husbands; others don't. I don't. I only want kindness and love—not steady, undemonstrative, holy love, but the kind of love that declares itself in a hundred lover-like actions—not only the little playful things which you do when you're kissing me, though I delight in them, but deep, passionate love."

"I could have given her that, and she knew it. And I thought that when I no longer did nothing, but was a soldier and going to be in the trenches, a generous wave might come over her, and she might promise to marry me when I came back."

"And didn't she soften even then?"

"Not she! She came out strong on the other side. She tried to make me promise only to be a friend for the future, by telling me that if I did, I might say a lover's good-bye to her."

"I think you must have misunderstood her, Roger. Grace is hard, but I can't picture her being coarse."

"There was no mistake about it," he said gloomily. "She gave me my what-do-you-call-it right enough."

"*Congé?*"

"Yes, I suppose that's it."

"Poor old Roger!" she said, trying to win him from his despair with all the little caressing touches with which she could interpret her feelings.

"And now you have put the lid on by showing me that I can never marry you."

"I am so sorry, dear. I can swear that I have never hated my husband so much as at this moment, when he stands between me and the crowning opportunity of my life."

CHAPTER XXIV

MR. AND MRS. MYRTLE

FOR the next night but one, Sunday, Hestia had two tickets for the great O.P. dinner to Lloyd George, at which Conservatives, even more than Liberals, were anxious to do honour to the statesman whose name is identified with war to the knife.

She had bought the tickets, as the public are entitled to in these hard times, through a member of the club, on the off-chance of Roger's being able to go to the dinner when he returned from his leave. She had a poor opinion of the punctuality of mobilization.

"You must go, Roger," she said. "All the cleverest men and the most ripping women on the 'halls' will come to the dinner, and do a turn for L.G."

"All right, if you'll let me pay for the tickets."

"Roger, mayn't I even do that?"

"Certainly not!"

"Well, you've got to come anyhow—they will only have the *best music*—the music you like best."

Everyone arrived half an hour before the dinner began, to be presented to the guest of the evening, and having experienced his smile, broke up into knots for their own edification. Hestia, both from the old Chelsea days and from her recent experiences with Mr. Dryander, had a large acquaintance among the beautiful girls who were going to furnish the entertainment of the evening. She introduced Roger, whom, since he was in khaki, and looked so thoroughly "one of the boys," they accepted most

graciously. She did not get another word with him until dinner, and even at dinner she had to share him, because "Beauty" was dotted all round them, and this being Roger's first experience of the stage, he was rather susceptible.

Hestia was delighted with his making such a good impression. It is a point of rivalry with girls in stage-land to be well-cavaliered. But it was unfortunate that the girl who sat on the other side of Roger was so much more beautiful than she was, and laid herself out for Roger's enjoyment the whole evening. Not that she wished to cut Hestia out ; she was careful to play the game by including Hestia in the conversation. But Hestia could not help pangs of jealousy alternating with pleasure at having given Roger a treat which he had never enjoyed before. For she might have had him all to herself, if she had let him take her to the *Savoy* or the *Carlton*, as he had first suggested.

When the songs began she was less perturbed, for then it was a case of everybody listening while the song lasted, and everybody making remarks at the same time when the song was done. Still, there was no reason why Leonora de Coucy should have explained everything to Roger so minutely, smiling straight into his sympathetic eyes. Of course, Hestia did not know the music-hall stage inside-out like Miss de Coucy did, but she could have explained everything sufficiently for Roger's illumination, and in the matter of establishing sympathy she knew a great deal more, and had a better right to use it.

Not that she had anything to complain of in Roger's behaviour. He was merely being cordial to a friend to whom she had introduced him. It was her fault for taking him there and introducing him. It was strange that she should be more jealous of Miss de Coucy than of Grace, who had his heart.

A message was brought to the Minister of Munitions, in a sealed note. He read it, and said good-bye very hurriedly, and disappeared. But it was past midnight before the last song was sung, and the company, after an eternity of good-byes, reached the doors of the hotel to disperse.

As the Minister had passed upstairs, escorted by the

manager, he had said, "Don't tell them down there; they're safe where they are, and it may be over before *their* concert is."

The banqueting halls, being down in the basement, the revellers had heard nothing of the tumult in the sky. But when they reached the hotel doors they seemed to have gone up into hell, for in the maze and blaze of crossing searchlights, they could see the devilish Zeppelins, right over their heads, dropping bombs on the West End of London; and the anti-aircraft guns were roaring, and shells were bursting in the sky, and it seemed as if the Last Call might sound for any one of them at the next moment.

Cabs there were none; the taxis had flown to their lairs; and if there had been a train for Kingsburgh on the time-table, all trains in and out of London were suspended during Zeppelin raids by the Admiralty's orders.

A few of the diners went back to the safety of the basement, but actresses love excitement, and are seldom lacking in courage, so the majority crowded into the street to see the spectacle from London's best grand-stand for a Zeppelin raid—Trafalgar Square. As the Commissionaire could not get them a taxi, Roger and Hestia went with them, and watched until the monsters turned tail and fled for the sea. Hestia was too excited to be frightened, and Roger said:

"I suppose I ought to be thankful for getting a dress-rehearsal! It may save me from stage-fright on my first night."

Hestia felt that he would have made exactly the same remark if a bomb had fallen in the Square itself, and the pieces were flying all round them. She could not picture Roger being frightened of anything, except a woman's tears.

Then came the question of how they should get home. A policeman informed them that there would be no train to Kingsburgh, either from Charing Cross or Waterloo, until five forty-five in the morning. On week-days, yes, but on Sundays the officials had a rest.

"There is nothing for it, then," said Roger, "but to go to the Hôtel de Luxe. They're more accustomed than

most places to people coming in late without any luggage."

"You know best," said Hestia. She was very silent as they walked across the Square to it.

Common sense told her that the Zeppelins, having once been driven off, were not in the least likely to come back again. But, just before they were driven off, she had seen an enormous bomb fall in Pall Mall, only a few hundred yards away, which made a noise like a thunder-clap and sent up flames and pieces of masonry and human bodies higher than the roofs of the tallest houses. She did not give way then, though she had seen the bodies quite plainly in the flash of the explosion. Yet, when the airships had gone, and she was going quietly to bed, she felt terrified.

Why? She knew quite well. She was a brave woman, and when she looked out of the doors of the Hotel Cecil, and saw the battle in the sky, and heard the deafening noise of the Zepp engines, and the guns, she would not have turned a hair even if she had been alone. Curiosity would have pinned her to the spot. But the last sight which she had witnessed—the bomb finding its prey—affected her so powerfully, perhaps because she had seen deaths, that she had only been able to endure it as she did because she had Roger at her side, and was hanging on his arm.

Face the horrors of the night alone, she could not, and just as they were about to step into the hotel, she said to him in a voice whose passionate pleading he could not resist, "Register as Mr. and Mrs. Myrtle—I shall go mad if I'm left alone!"

Roger, flushed with the most brilliant evening which he had ever spent in his life, and taken by surprise when he had not a moment to reflect, yielded where in cold blood his sense of chivalry and playing the game would have restrained him. He would have told himself that if he still loved Grace to the exclusion of all others, it was not playing the game with either woman, and that it was not chivalrous to take advantage of Hestia's weakness.

Now, in the fraction of a second that he had for reflection, he listened to the suggestion of Mephistopheles, who

whispered that "Margaret" was not an ignorant girl, but a woman who had a husband too vile to mention, whom she wished to have divorced long ago. Her eyes, said the tempter, must be open.

The fiend had been playing on more than her fears as Hestia crossed the Square. At one step he said, "You owe nothing to your husband." At the next he cried, "Your youth is slipping away." At the next, "This is the best of manhood which has ever been within your grasp." At the next, "This man whom you have loved as you have loved no other human being might be gone by this time to-morrow, will be gone, at any rate, by this time next week, across the sea, and soon will be leading his company through a hell of fire a hundred times worse than you have seen to-night. Only chance officers come out alive."

And all the way across the Square he dinned into her ears, "You did not seek this opportunity. You have not even the blame of thinking of it. Fate of her free will gave it to you, and if you disappoint Fate she will never be your friend again."

Roger wrote down in the book, as naturally as if he had been doing it for a couple of years of married life, "Mr. and Mrs. Myrtle."

"We have no luggage because we've been dining in town and cannot get a taxi to take us back to Kingsburgh."

"Oh, that's all right, sir," said the hotel clerk. "We get a lot of people like this every time there's a Zepraid."

CHAPTER XXV

A LETTER FROM GRACE

WHEN Roger got back to his hotel at Kingsburgh on the Monday he found some letters which his servant had brought over from the camp. One was in Grace's well-known handwriting.

The sight of that writing threw him into a tumult of feelings, like the tumult of Zeppelins and searchlights and shell-bursts in the sky. It made him reflect on what he had done. Searchlights played on it from every side. It might not be a mortal sin against Hestia, unless some enemy learned of it and used it to injure her at *Via Pacis*. But he certainly could not meet Grace's glance with the same unashamed eyes that had saluted it for all the years of their friendship.

When he had parted from Hestia an hour before, their new relationship had seemed to him a sort of sacrament crowning their affection for each other, a sort of gathering-up of the broken threads, which marred his enthusiasm in going to face the enemy.

Now it seemed to him a cowardly breach of the code of chivalry which had governed his life, and taking advantage of the weakness of a woman for his own selfish pleasure.

All this revulsion of feeling was produced by the mere sight of the handwriting of the woman whom he really loved. What would it be when he dared to open her letter, even if it was only written to give him the cold comfort which he expected?

He read all his other letters first, before Grace's, for

which, until yesterday, he had been hungering and thirsting.

Finally he summoned up the courage to read it. It ran :

“ DEAR ROGER,

“ Since you will not be going to France for a few days, and Dad has to come up to a meeting with the solicitors of the insurance company, I shall come up with him. As we are so poor now, we are going to a boarding-house, at 40, New Bedford Place, kept by some Italian people whom he started in business years ago.

“ I have something very important to say to you, so will you come up and see me there on Tuesday night at nine o'clock? Madame Barbensi is going to lend us her private sitting-room while we are there, so we shall be undisturbed.

“ With love from us both,

“ Yours affectionately,

“ GRACE LORRAINE.

“ Please wire reply.”

Roger had arranged to spend all his evenings, until he went away, with Hestia, and the very second evening he would have to disappoint her, if he went to Grace. He hated having to cry off when they were only in the second round.

He felt as if he ought to go whatever happened afterwards, but he dreaded breaking it to Hestia.

“ Please wire reply.” What was he to reply? He could not send any reply until he had seen Hestia. He rushed to the hotel telephone to ring her up. Hestia was out, doing her shopping to give Roger a dinner of things which he specially liked.

Also she expected Mr. Dryander to lunch, and though he and Roger were good enough friends—they often golfed together in summer down at Seacombe, and he used to send Roger, when in town, seats for the theatre—Hestia did not want Roger to come to Fleurdelys House while he was there, because if he, being a resident of Seacombe, met

Roger at Hestia's rooms, all Seacombe would be sure to know it.

When she got home the maid said that Mr. Wynyard had rung her up while she was out, and would she ring up directly she came in?

She rang him up, and explained why he was not to call or telephone until she rang him up again. In the interval, Roger was chafing to send a telegram to Grace, because the time at which she left Seacombe might depend on it.

It was tea-time before she telephoned again, because Mr. Dryander had other things besides business to discuss after lunch. He had long been an admirer of Hestia's, but the circumstances under which he had seen her at Seacombe had not been favourable for developments, or he might have exerted himself on her behalf before this. She was for ever in the company of his children, or Roger, or the Lorraines. Before he had proposed collaboration he had never seen her alone for five minutes, and until he had seen her in her town clothes, he had no idea what a very pretty and dashing woman she was. And her going out to Kingsburgh for lodgings had put certain ideas into his head.

He came down to Kingsburgh arrayed to make an impression. You would not have found a better-dressed man on the Stock Exchange. Music-hall people are eternally thinking of smartness. Mr. Dryander, who always took his lunch at one of the smartest hotels or restaurants, had the intuition to pick out the best-dressed men and imitate them. He knew that the ideal of the best-dressed men is not to enter into rivalry, but to wear nothing wrong. And this restrained style was specially needed by a man with his high colouring, and curly, carefully-valeted red hair. The only thing which he allowed to be elaborate was the flower in his buttonhole.

He was showing to his best advantage, and he was quiet and ingratiating, but somehow he was not making the progress that he had hoped. Hestia did not appear to be noticing his personality. She was confining herself strictly to business, and refusing the various invitations, though he had gauged her tastes correctly.

It was quite obvious that though she was willing for him

to stay and talk as long as he pleased—and in that she was being tactful, not sincere—she was merely receiving him as a collaborator, as one whom she did not intend to know as well as she knew his wife. In fact, she had asked if his wife would be at one place to which he had invited her, and had excused herself when she had heard that Mrs. Dryander would not be present.

Mr. Dryander was distinctly annoyed. He did not allow his annoyance to be seen, but he meant to make personal favours the price of any further collaboration.

And all this time—while he was loitering and putting out personal feelers, Roger was thinking what he should say to Grace.

At last the page-boy came to tell Roger that he was wanted on the 'phone. He flew downstairs, and then hesitated before he took up the receiver. Then he took it up very quickly and put it to his ear.

“ Hallo ! ”

“ Hallo ! I’m Hestia, dear. Let me apologize. I was out when you telephoned, and I’ve had Mr. Dryander with me ever since. I did not want to be telephoning to you while he was here—you can guess why.”

“ Yes,” 'phoned Roger, rather dolefully—his conscience was accusing him.

“ So I waited until he’d gone. What is it, dear ? ”

“ Oh, Grace has written that she and her father are coming up to town to-morrow, and she wants to know if I can call there after dinner about nine,” said Roger, trying to be matter-of-fact.

In a room his voice would have been a dreadful failure, but Hestia took the uncertainty of the accents as a *jeu de phone*, and thought no evil.

“ Of course you must go, Roger. But you’ll dine with me first, won’t you ? ” She longed to add, “ Can’t I go with you ? ” She knew Grace well enough to drop in on her. But she had a foreboding knocking hard at her heart which told her that Grace had something to say which would make her presence not at all welcome.

“ Thanks awfully ! ” said Roger, still in the wrong voice, and feeling inclined to hit the telephone.

"Are you coming along now, Roger?" asked a voice, whose exact tone he could not gauge.

"I'm going to the post-office to send that telegram, and then I'm coming on to you straight away," he said, more robustly. The thing was off his mind. Hestia was not fractious about his leaving her to call on Grace. When a thing was on Roger's mind, it weighed very heavily; that was why he always pushed things off as soon as possible.

The floor of the post-office was paved with crumpled-up paper before Roger Wynyard got that telegram off, and all he said in the end was, "Delighted to call at your lodgings to-morrow night at nine.—ROGER." Which is exactly what he would have written without any thought at all.

But on his way from the post-office to Fleurdelys House, he was again troubled. How would Hestia receive him? It was only natural for her to be disappointed and *triste*. Would she be annoyed as well?

He need not have faltered on the doorstep. He had rung the bell instead of walking in unannounced. Hestia was serene, smiling and affectionate. She kissed him exactly as if nothing had happened, though she dreaded the import of his interview with Grace.

"Well, Roger, old boy, have you got the telegram off?" she asked cheerily—she knew how he disliked even that much literary effort.

"Yes, I managed it all right."

"And you said you'd go?"

"Yes."

"That's all right," she said in tones of approval, which she was very far from feeling.

They spent the evening as if nothing had happened or was going to happen. Roger, for very shame's sake, could not change his attitude to Hestia, though he was stabbed with doubt when he thought of Grace. Hestia was sweet and womanly. She reciprocated, but made no advances, and spent most of the time at her piano. She could interpret her feelings in music without any risk of Roger's understanding them. She felt that there was something in the air, something that might be inimical to her. She felt that Roger was uneasy and nervous.

But she liked to have him standing behind her, trifling with her hair, or what not, while she was playing, for it was Roger's way, and if her forebodings were justified, it was all the more reason for having a golden day before the clouds lowered. She was not one of those who go out to meet trouble half-way.

Roger, the happy-hearted, soon felt the contagion of her optimism, and they passed a happy evening, of the type which they had passed when she first came to Kingsburgh.

And even after his return to his hotel, when he was away from the spell of her personality, he felt at peace with himself. Hestia had bound up his lacerated feelings with her friendship, like the Good Samaritan, when Grace had left him by the wayside so badly wounded and bruised, and Hestia would remain his best friend for the rest of their lives. Grace had shown a most obvious desire that he and Hestia should be friends. She would have been glad, he was sure, if he had married Hestia, not knowing, as he knew now, that Hestia had an old man of the sea on her lovely shoulders. Of her own accord, had he not parted from her so abruptly, she might have mentioned Hestia's name. There was no reason why he should eschew Hestia.

Fortified in his resolution, he spent all the next day with Hestia, avoiding *têtes-à-têtes*, it was true, because he dreaded introspective conversations. He took her to a picture-show private view in the morning, to *Ciro's* for luncheon, to a matinée at *Daly's* and tea at the *Carlton*, returning to Kingsburgh just in time to snatch a hurried dinner before he had to fly back to town for his engagement with Grace.

Except the picture-show, which they had included to fill up the time, Hestia had enjoyed their day immensely. *Ciro's* and the *Carlton* and *Daly's* were the sort of background which she liked for her days—they supplied the life and bustle and colour for which she craved, which in her *Chelsea* days she had found in *Crosby Hall* dances and *Soho* restaurants. And Roger did these things so well. He did not know what economy meant, poor dear,

having had that three hundred a year for pocket-money, and all expenses paid, ever since he came of age—half-way through his Oxford career. Roger's solicitude for her enjoyment had filled her with a sense of pride and well-being. It was a kind of caress in its way.

So content was she that it was she more than he who kept an eye on the time for the train which was to take him up to London to meet Grace. Roger was haphazard in such matters ; except where an appointment was official, he was very hazy about timing it.

CHAPTER XXVI

AN ACT OF GRACE

HESTIA did not go to the station with him, but the gaiety of her conversation lingered in his mind. And in the train, when he had lit his cigarette, he crossed his legs and thought at ease. It was only when he got out of the tube, into which he had changed at Hammersmith, that he began to think about his meeting with Grace, beyond a general feeling of gratification that he was going to meet one of his greatest friends again after bidding what he thought would be a permanent good-bye until his return from France.

Then he suddenly began to ask himself what line he should take if Grace referred to rumours of his increasing intimacy with Hestia ; he was not, of course, thinking of the latest episode, but of his constant calling at Fleur-delys House since Hestia had occupied lodgings there. This might have reached Grace's ears, and if Grace was annoyed, she had an uncompromising way of expressing it—one which would require great tact in answering, if he answered at all. But he was not sure that he would, for Grace's dismissal of him, as he took it to be, must surely deprive her of the right of criticizing his actions, which she had exercised ever since they were children on account of the footing on which they stood. He would not let her dictate to him about Hestia, he resolved. If there was any rivalry, Hestia should come first, because she had behaved best.

While he was framing the conditions of peace in his

mind, he found himself outside No. 40, New Bedford Place. He rang the bell and asked, "Have Mr. and Miss Lorraine arrived?"

"Yes, sir."

"Then will you tell Miss Lorraine that I am here—Mr. Wynyard?"

"She expects you, sir," said the girl, leading the way to the small room, intended for a pantry, at the head of the kitchen stairs, which Madame Barbensi had converted into a little sitting-room and office for herself.

There he found Grace, alone, Mr. Lorraine having gone off to see Mr. Skewen at the First Avenue Hotel that evening, instead of waiting to see him on the following day, because his meeting with the insurance company's solicitors was so early.

Grace had been bitterly hurt when he had parted from her with one steady kiss and handshake and those brief words. It was the shock of that parting which had made her realize what Roger meant to her, and drove her into writing that letter, when he had sent the telegram to his mother announcing the postponement of his departure.

She did not allude to it when they met, and received him in an unusually feminine and gracious mood. She was holding the lapels of his coat, as she used to when he was a boy at school, if she had something particular to say to him.

This might be so much to the good, thought the bewildered Roger. In this mood she was unlikely to ask him disagreeable and unanswerable questions.

But this time, while she held him thus, there was no long talk; she did not at first say a word; she only looked at him with affection in those lovely eyes, so blue that they were almost violet, so clear that they seemed wells of intelligence and calm wisdom.

All his life Roger had been ruled by those calm eyes, so childlike in their transparency, so searching in their judgment. Now, instead of questioning or judging, they seemed to have a message. Already her mesmerism over Roger was re-established. It was for her to speak.

He grew shamefaced under her gaze. Every day in

the time, which had passed since they had parted, accused him, and there was one moment at which he burned with shame under the silent arraignment.

As Grace stood before him, he recognized what a great gulf there was, to use the fine expression of the Book of the Revelation, between her and Hestia. Hestia was lovely and sweet, and, in spite of her fall, a good woman, because she was so good-hearted. But she had graduated, as it were, in Chelsea, and was a Bohemian unashamed. Grace was a Diana—a Diana who had not yet met an Endymion. She had no past; she had never thought of Comus and his rout, or Venus and her doves. Her mind was filled with virgin thoughts now of sport, now of study and Art. Grace, for all her splendid womanhood, was barely grown up at heart.

And Roger was on her side of the gulf, not Hestia's. Once in a way, it is true, he loved going to a musical-comedy and dining at a gay restaurant. He was a great patron of the *Gaiety* and *Daly's* when he was in town, and he loved the glitter of the *Savoy* and the *Carlton* and *Ciro's*. But, left to himself, he would never stay in town a week. Of his own free will he spent most of the year in his own home. It was only when Grace lectured him into it that he stayed in his chambers in the Temple and "ate his dinners"—as if any lawyer in his right senses would ever give Roger a brief!

Roger, whose mind was so taken up with sport, ought always to have been in the Army. In our Army, in the times of peace, sport was recognized as the serious business of the officers, who filled in their time with a little drill, and raising the tone of the men committed to their charge. This would have suited Roger exactly, and he would have won universal respect in his Regiment or Battery, in a country station where there was plenty of sport going.

Unfortunately, his mother, who had only seen the smart and dissipated side of Army life, dreaded its pitfalls for the easy-going Roger, and dissuaded him from it.

Such was the man confronted by Diana. In her presence once more he was struck with the difference of

type between her and women such as Hestia. Grace, as she stood before Roger, was unconscious of sex as Hestia could not have been. That did not enter into the momentous decision she was taking. She was a veritable Diana as she stood there, tall and physically perfect, exquisitely graceful, with the glittering, pale golden hair which the Ancients loved to attribute to the sister of Apollo, a face so exquisitely fair that it would flame if blushes were ever called to it, and features whose fine chiselling bespoke refinement as clearly as they bespoke good family.

"Roger," she said, "I sent for you to tell you that I have changed my mind." She took it for granted that he had not changed his, that he was ready to repeat the offer which he had been making in season and out of season, following the Apostolic precept, for five years past.

For a moment, remembering his offence, he was smitten with dismay. How was he to accept this honour, which had been the desire of his life, from his Queen, when he had committed treason? Once more he listened to the voice of the tempter. Might he not, when he was on the eve of facing death, allow himself this joy and glory for a day?—if only he could do it without being a cad to Hestia! It must be so long before he came back, if ever he came back (the "if" about it suggested no terrors to his courageous, happy-go-lucky mind), and it was such a gift of the gods that Grace, the unattainable, was at length giving him her promise that she would be his wife when the war was over.

But what to say he could not think. Roger was no casuist in words, whatever he might be to his conscience. At last, seeing her pain at his silence, he murmured, "Oh, Grace!" There was no need for him to counterfeit emotion.

She was glad that he did not try to fold her in his arms, or overwhelm her with kisses, as she had feared. He was aching to—Heaven knew how much—but could not until he had settled with his soul. Her hope was that he should approach this, the most serious moment of their lives, with the calmness and deliberation which it

deserved. She kept her hold on his coat lapels warily, ready to avoid him lightly, as the Arthurian knights eluded the enemy in their tournaments, should he show any sign of advances. Roger, dumbfounded by the turn which events had taken, was relieved by the impracticability of making them.

"I sent for you," she said, "to tell you that I had changed my mind about our marriage. I will marry you, and, as I don't believe in long engagements, I am going to marry you before you go. Be a good boy—don't worry me. Sit down beside me quietly, while we talk things out; they are very difficult."

Roger obeyed. If things were going to be difficult for her, they were going to be a hundredfold more difficult for him. He was willing to do anything to gain time.

Grace seated herself on the sofa. Roger was going to pull up the one chair, but she drew in her skirts to make room for him. He seated himself beside her with one of his sincere smiles.

He was absolutely sincere in his love for her, and his desire to be her husband. His one doubt was if honour would permit it. Was it just to Hestia to accept this gift from Grace? Was it anything but vilely dishonourable to accept it from Grace until he had confessed everything, except Hestia's name, to her? His code said, in no equivocal voice, "You must not let Hestia forgive it even if she were willing; you must not listen to Grace until you have confessed." But the tempter said, "Let us eat and drink, for to-morrow we die."

"Now, Roger," she said, "if we are going to marry . . ."

Roger, who had said nothing to show his assent, could see no answer. His only chance was to let Grace talk on, to give him time to think.

She was astonished and hurt that he gave no answer, but believing him to be still bruised by their last encounter, and not yet able to forgive it, proceeded:

"If we are going to marry before you go, we ought to do it to-morrow."

To-morrow! Roger almost started from the sofa.

Yet, if they were to be married before he went, common sense and natural instincts said marry as soon as possible.

Grace was feeling more and more hurt. She had pictured Roger pouring out his whole heart to her in impetuous school-boy fashion. The rift must have been deeper than she thought. Still she proceeded.

Roger was to go and get a license as soon as the office opened at 10 a.m., and they were to be married some time in the afternoon, early enough to do the train journey to wherever they were going.

Roger, who had been able to tell his mother such a few hours before that he had never told a lie to save his skin, fell from the high standard of truth once more. He told Grace what was true—that there could be no question of a train journey, as he was confined to the London district in order to be available at once, if his sailing orders were suddenly altered. And he supplemented this by a flat lie: he would not be able, he said, to leave Kingsburgh itself, until after five o'clock. He left Grace to imagine that by Kingsburgh he meant the camp, and she pictured him doing uninteresting drills and inspections and reports while he was longing to be with her.

And the cruel irony of the situation was that he *was* burning to be with her, burning to have the marriage performed at the earliest moment possible, hungering and thirsting for her to be his, at the very minute that he was lying to postpone it.

"Will you be kept there as strictly when we are married?" asked Grace, almost weeping with mortification.

"No, I shall tell the Adjutant, and get 'leave off' till we sail. I can't get the regulation about staying in the London district altered. But Cobb, another of our chaps who has just made a war-marriage—that's what we call it, if a chap gets married in a hurry when the Regiment is under orders to sail—has got leave off all duties till the night before we start, so I should have the same."

Grace was following what he said with such painful interest that he thought she must be sure to see from his face how ashamed he was. For all of this except one

iota was a lie. He already had exactly the same leave as Cobb had, but he had no other excuse to offer for not proceeding to procure the marriage license in the morning, as she had requested, and, even if the sky fell, nothing would induce him to take the irrevocable step of marriage until he had seen Hestia, and received her assent.

This he was in honour bound to do. He dared not ask himself if honour would let him accept the assent, for he knew what the answer would be, and if Hestia assented he meant to take the gift.

The truly honourable thing to do would have been to make a clean breast of it to Grace, not, of course, giving the name of the woman whom he had injured. But now that the wish of his heart—marriage with Grace—was within his grasp, he clung desperately to the idea that if he did not commit himself, he might find a way out somehow, both to save his honour and win his heart's desire.

Grace waited for him to proceed. He was a long time coming to the point, but she had no suspicion of any let or hindrance, beyond the one she knew, for Roger was not quick in grasping a fresh idea.

"I could go the day after to-morrow, when I've got leave, to that place, and get the license the minute it opens," he said.

"And we might get married directly afterwards. We should not be losing many hours in that way."

"No, we shouldn't," admitted Roger, unable this time to keep the eagerness out of his voice. In thirty-six hours, if Hestia and honour did not say him nay, the desire of his life might be fulfilled and he might be Grace's husband; he might know the ineffable happiness of having Grace for his wife before he went to battle.

Grace caught that note of eagerness; it was like balm to her wounded soul.

But as he said it he realized the wrong of what he was saying. He was conniving in the whole thing being treated as settled, though he could not see how under heaven it was to be done. It would only be human for Hestia to give a verdict which would be as irrevocable

as the crack of doom, as far as marriage for him was concerned. And if Hestia assented, would honour hold its peace? But to have any chance of the realization of his desires there was only one way—to let Grace go ahead without hindrance, and then, if the worst came to the worst, he must go through the awful humiliation of telling her why the marriage could not take place.

"Very well, Roger," said Grace, still, in spite of that one note of eagerness, bitterly hurt at the flatness with which everything had fallen. "We'll put our marriage off till Thursday. We'll be at the office when it opens on Thursday morning, and as soon as we've got the license we'll go and get married. And oh, Roger," she added, with the deepest concern, "I suppose we can't get married in a church, can we, with a license of this kind? Isn't it hateful having to do it in this way?"

"I don't know," said Roger, with a touch of his old self, "I've never been married before. I could ask the man who sells the license."

"Oh, Roger, I promise to love you twice as much if we could!" cried Grace. It was the worst blow of all to her pride that the last of her race should be married in a vulgar registry office, in addition to the marriage being such a snatched affair.

The way she worded it, the change in the tone of her voice, showed that it was not her love which had been hurt, by his indifference, but her pride. He was under no illusions as to why she was marrying him. It was not because she loved him; he knew that she did not love him in the full sense of the word, but because he loved her, and she wished to give her friend of friends the consolation of achieving the desire of his life at the eleventh hour.

Presently Roger—going back to the lighter tone to conceal his feelings—said, "Both things might be easier to manage if your father came too. His presence would show the licensing Johnnie that it was O.K.; and if the law allows a parson to do the trick, we should be more likely to catch one who was willing if your father was there to give you away."

"He means to come, I'm sure," said Grace.

"Of course you have told him all about it?" said Roger, still in the lighter mood, and wondering if she had had the nerve to do it.

"Of course, and he told me that it had always been his dearest wish, but he said that it made him bankrupt over again, because he had wanted so to leave you a rich man."

"Dear old Uncle Henry!" said Roger, recalling his childhood's name for Mr. Lorraine.

"Where are we going when we are married, Roger?" said Grace, pursuing the subject in her practical way.

"The Dormy House at Sunningdale if they'll let me go as far." It was the most out-of-the-way place he could think of in the London district.

"Sunningdale! Oh, how deliciously like you, Roger!" cried Grace, who had recovered her spirits, now that she had read the desire which underlay Roger's hesitation. "But you won't get leave for that."

"Well, then, Kensington. No one ever goes there except to live there."

"But why do you want a place without any people?"

"I thought that was the idea of a honeymoon."

"Perhaps it is," said Grace, trying to make Roger's description fit in with the saying that Kensington is London's best bedroom.

Roger was not so inadvertent as she imagined in suggesting these places. He had an eye on chance meetings which might be embarrassing, if this amazing marriage came off.

A wild longing to show his real feelings suddenly seized him. Grace, the love of his life, whose pride was part of her beauty, whom all the men who had ever been thrown into contact with her had coveted as a wife, was seated beside him, arranging for their marriage before they were forty-eight hours older, and nothing could hinder it but what he had done himself, done since he had seen her last—either by its being brought to her ears, or by its making it impossible for him to accede.

Surely if she was so ready to marry him, that caution,

"Sit down beside me quietly while we talk things out," must be withdrawn now? But she gave no sign, and he was still by honour bound. He heaved an inward sigh.

Each was puzzled by the other. Roger, who knew the love-light in a woman's eyes only too well, was struck by Grace's impassivity. She seemed to be marrying him as a duty—possibly as a sacrifice to her country. Grace had expected Roger to be overwhelming in his gratitude, to be almost pathetically a lover. But he had been stunned and tongue-tied. She was astonished that his flare-up at Via Pacis on the last night had affected him so strongly. He had been her devoted slave for years.

A man like Mr. Ebbutt might have failed to reciprocate because he was dumbfounded by her having swung right round after refusing him so many times. But this was not Roger's way.

That he had not opposed her astonished *him* most of all. By all rights he ought to have done so, but he was afraid lest, if he lifted up one finger against it, the vision of delight might pass for ever.

When Roger rose to go he had given Grace no promise in return for her proclamation. Did she not notice it, or not require it? He had managed to avoid it by echoing what she said, and saying what he could, instead of what he would, do. Alas! Truth was at the bottom of the well as far as he was concerned. He was satisfied if he could avoid direct lies now.

He was anxious, if it had been possible without risking explanations which he dared not face, to convey to Grace his passionate desire to marry her, if only a merciful Heaven would save him from the consequences of the act which he had committed. And he was as anxious to avoid saying what might be turned into a positive lie, if the wrong which he had done Hestia made it impossible for him to marry.

It was a sorry predicament for a straight and chivalrous man like Roger to find himself in. It had come to this: that he could not look either Grace or Hestia or his mother in the face.

"I suppose I shall see you to-morrow, Roger?" said Grace, as he was leaving.

"I'm not sure that I shall be able to get up from Kingsburgh, but if I can manage it, I'll 'phone. I suppose Mrs. Thing has a 'phone, hasn't she?"

"Madame Barbensi? Yes, I find that she has."

"Well, if I can't come, I might come to breakfast with you on Thursday morning. Do you still breakfast at half-past eight?"

"Dad does, and I shall on Thursday morning, because it's so serious to think that one is going to be married the day after to-morrow, and not know until the very morning when or where one's wedding is to be."

She was the matter-of-fact Grace once more, facing serenely a new form of *mariage de convenance*.

CHAPTER XXVII

THE LOVE OF WOMAN WHICH PASSETH ALL UNDERSTANDING

HESTIA had her breakfast at eight—as great a novelty as the millennium for her—and came down to it, instead of taking it in bed, and dressed with extreme care for it.

Had not Roger said that he would run in early to tell her the sequel of that enigmatic summons?

When she got down and picked up the *Daily Mirror*, the paper on which she depended exclusively for the happenings of the universe, the first thing which she saw in it was her husband's portrait—"Mr. Christopher Cadbury, the eminent comedian, who had a miraculous escape in Sunday night's Zeppelin raid."

How nearly she had been free!—free to marry the man of her heart, the man whose coveted addresses she had just refused, the man whose wife she had been during the joys and fears of that terrible night!

She had finished her breakfast by half-past eight, and every minute until Roger came seemed an hour.

Roger knew that she was not an early riser, and he had no appetite for the task before him. He telephoned to the Adjutant and ascertained that there had been no change in the sailing orders, and skimmed all the hotel papers before he walked round to break the news to her in words, which he had been framing in the watches of the night.

He, too, had noticed Cadbury's escape. Cadbury, who, one paper had said, had been standing in the window of the wrecked club, deriding the idea of danger with

coarse blasphemy, when the explosion happened, and in some miraculous way had escaped uninjured.

He felt even grateful to Cadbury—Cadbury, for whose blood he had thirsted not ninety hours earlier, for with the obstacles in its way increasing it, his desire to marry Grace had grown to a passion now, and if Cadbury had died, he must have married Hestia. Even Cadbury played his part in the dispensations of Providence.

Hestia was at the window, waiting for him. How radiant and smiling she was as she beckoned him in! In so short a passage as from the front door to her sitting-room on the ground-floor he had a spasm of remorse.

No sooner had the door closed than she almost flung herself into his arms, in her exultation. But noticing how tired and worried he looked, changed her mood, to the sympathetic gentleness of a wife.

“ Well, dear, did she want you for anything particular? ” she asked cheerily, although, or perhaps because, she saw that he looked so tired and worried.

Tired as well as worried he was, because he had not slept all night. Fate was dragging him down like that gigantic Cephalopod in Seacombe Harbour. The waters of shame lay deep above his head, and once more it was for the sake of Grace Lorraine that he had plunged into the depths. But for her he could have given Hestia the life-long worship which he owed her since he could not marry her. But now, when he believed Grace lost for ever, she had suddenly reappeared, offering him the prize which ever since he was a child had hung just out of his reach like the bough of Tantalus.

Having washed his hands of Grace, and given a hostage to Hestia, honour in no uncertain accents bade him refuse the prize, and redeem the hostage. But he knew, that if he did, he would regret it with a fierce regret, all his life.

For apart from all the difficulties, which might be smoothed over by Hestia’s passion for Roger, there was the great elemental fact that he had given his heart to Grace at a time when her reciprocation had seemed hopeless, and that the impossible had happened in the shape of her determining that it was her duty to marry him.

All night long Roger had been torn between the two poles—the pole of honour and the pole of selfish instincts. He was conscious all through that if he had been told six months ago that he could have hesitated, he would not have believed it possible.

The code of which he had been so proud ever since he became a Public School boy, the code of which he had been such an eminent exponent, did not leave him in doubt for a moment as to what he ought to do if he was to retain his respect in his own eyes. But for the first time he found himself listening to the suaver voice which is within us, instead of to the still, small voice of conscience. The suave voice talked to him of happiness ; the question of the greater happiness of the greater number was too wide a subject to be within Roger's focus, but the smaller question of happiness being the prime object of an uncertain existence, whose end is so wrapped in mystery that we do not know why we exist, was beginning to present itself to Roger. He knew that the individual's happiness, like all other rights of the individual, must be limited by the rights of others. But the suave voice, the Mephistopheles within us, asked, would the sacrifice of his happiness bestow on Hestia anything like what the sacrifice cost him ? Was it worth it ? in other words.

Then he would scourge himself with contempt for harbouring such vile thoughts a single instant. When he had abased himself to the lowest depths as he tossed and thought, he made laughter for fiends by going to the other extreme and picturing to himself the feast of happiness which he would fling to the winds if he listened to the dictates of honour.

And when the long night of vigil was over, he had no clear purpose in his mind. He knew what he ought to do, and hoped that some stroke of fortune would prevent his doing it.

It was this Roger who presented himself to Hestia on that fourth day of the week in the morning.

“ Well, dear, did she want you for anything in particular ? ” Hestia had asked.

How was he to tell her, when Grace's object in coming to town struck so directly at the roots of her happiness? Was it more merciful to tell the truth or to try and spare her?

Either he was less afraid of losing her than he was of losing Grace, or he was less in awe of her, or he was more in sympathy with her than he was with Grace, for he rose to the heights of being honest again.

"She came to tell me a thing which affects us all," he said. "She proposes to marry me before I go to France."

"And what did you say, Roger?" she asked, bravely repressing her feelings until she knew what Love required of her.

"Oh, I temporized like a weak coward!"

"You pretended that you were going to marry her?"

"Not exactly that. I let her say what she had to say without interrupting her, and appeared to agree with her, and when she talked about licenses and whether we could get a clergyman to marry us in a church, I entered into the discussion in an abstract way, as if . . ."

"As if you had made up your mind to marry her?"

"Yes," he said steadily. "I am sure that she did have that impression."

"And didn't you think of me, Roger?"

"Indeed I did, and that was where half of my miserable hypocrisy came in!"

"How?"

"I did not once say that I would marry her. I allowed her to take it for settled. I echoed what she said. I was a thorough-paced hypocrite."

"But how does this affect me?"

"It was because I belong to you—I am not a free agent. I had not the power to promise."

"Then why did you deceive her by pretending to acquiesce, and by discussing a lot of things which you did not mean to do?"

"I cannot tell you this, Hestia!"

"Why not? Are we not the greatest friends that any people in the world could be?"

"I cannot tell you, but you know."

"Yes, I know. You did not wish to burn your boats with her. You wished to keep in with us both, in the hope that something might turn up to relieve you from making a decision so painful to your generous nature."

"I am afraid so."

"And she spoiled the possibility by insisting on being married to-day, or perhaps to-morrow."

"Yes."

"Oh, my poor Roger, what a calamity it is to be caught between the upper and the nether millstone!"

"You are talking rather over my head, dear, but I think I know what you must mean."

Hestia did not speak for a few minutes, but various signs showed the struggle which was going on within her more eloquently than many words, for her eyes, and the silent movings of her mouth, told the truth, whereas words might merely have been used to conceal thought.

At length she said, "Tell me truly, Roger, or I shall never forgive you—tell me, as you hope for heaven, or love your life, or whatever oath is most binding on you: Do you want to marry Grace?"

This was the severest test of the truth to which Roger had ever been put. He had kept his promise to his mother as regards physical pain—that he would never tell a lie because he was afraid. But here was a new test. To tell the truth now would be a breach of the Public School boys' code; it was sneaking.

Hestia saw his hesitation. "You're not going to play fair! Remember that your life-long happiness depends on your telling the truth."

He was still silent.

And then Hestia told a lie in her turn.

"If you don't marry her, I shall have to let my husband get a divorce so that you may marry me. I can't leave you solitary. And think how unhappy you will make my life, if you marry me, while all the time you are dying to marry Grace."

As he hesitated still she said, "You are too generous to put it into words, and I thank Heaven that you have

come out the chivalrous gentleman that I pictured you, but your silence has told me more sincerely, I think, than you would have had the cruelty to put into words, that you would give the world, except my feelings, to marry Grace. You can marry her with all my goodwill."

"Oh, Hestia, how ever can I thank you!" he blurted out.

"You have nothing to thank me for. It was for my sake, not for yours, that I let you make love to me. You have given me more gratification than any lover I ever had. And you have done me the honour of taking me seriously and falling in love with me, while I was only amusing myself with you. You were so deliciously fresh, my Roger!"

"As the *fiancé* and husband of Grace you must not think of me any more, except as a devoted friend, who will always have your happiness—the happiness of both of you—at her heart."

"I shall never forget how I have wronged you, dearest Hestia!"

"Tush! You haven't wronged me—you were the victim of my Circean wiles. I shall tell Grace so if any villain ever brings the story to her ears. It is nothing that, if I have many lovers before I die, I shall never love any so well as you. Go to Grace to-morrow with a clean heart, knowing that I would not marry you if you asked me, and I were free."

"This is pure self-sacrifice, Hestia. I don't know why you say it."

"Indeed it is not, Roger. When I marry again, I must marry a man who has no locked chamber in his heart."

"Hestia, I will not deceive you. You don't know what a load you have lifted off my feelings by telling me to marry Grace with your goodwill. I did want to marry her desperately, but I could not do it unless you forgave me."

"It was dear of you to look at it like that, but as I have explained to you, I have nothing to forgive, if I was amusing myself."

"The debt exists, Hestia."

"Well, pay it off by doing something for me. Go for a walk with me from now till dark. I am a good walker—

I used to go long tramps on a Sunday in my Chelsea days. We will stop and have bread and cheese and beer somewhere for our lunch. But we'll spend all the rest of the time walking, for while we are walking we shall think of all sorts of things which we have to say to each other, and if we are walking in the winter mud of Surrey we shan't be able to get too sentimental over them."

"Right you are! I'd love a long tramp."

"You see, you mustn't come here to-night, or I might feel inclined to amuse myself again by pretending to be sentimental. I think you ought to go and call on Grace to-night."

"No," said Roger, "I shall pass the evening in my own room at the hotel, thinking of you both, remembering all the good of you, and how little I deserve either."

The walk supplied him with enough to think of. When they left Kingsburgh they went swinging across the Park to the other Royal borough of Kingston, with its group of ancient houses round the market-place, modern Surbiton and old-time Esher, to a little public-house on the Thames, where men rowing down from Oxford to Chelsea, as Roger once did with a friend, while (unbeknown to him) Hestia (who was to bring a torch into his life) was there in her heyday before her marriage, put up for the night.

The day was bright and warm, though it was January, and Roger, dreading sentiment if he were within four walls with Hestia, ordered their bread and cheese on the lawn sloping down to the river. Damp grass made no difference to Hestia, he knew.

The air had been frosty when they started, just the atmosphere to stimulate such a pair, trying to remember all they had to remember before Roger crossed one channel to the "faery lands forlorn" of matrimony, and the other to the foughten fields of France. It was temperamental to both of them only to remember the happy incidents in the years in which they had known each other, including that momentous struggle with the octopus, when Roger and Grace would have joined the Past but for Hestia's promptness in running for the

lifeboat-men. Both of them remembered simultaneously Grace's saying that she hoped that Hestia had not saved them to her own undoing. In one breath they exclaimed :

" Do you remember what Grace said ? "

" I'm afraid that it was true," added Roger.

" It wasn't—I should have gone without some of the happiest moments of my life if you had perished then," said Hestia stoutly.

" It's very sweet and sporting of you to say so, Hestia."

" I do say so. I don't regret anything that has passed. I only regret that you are not mine."

" Then I won't marry Grace ! "

" Rats ! You must. You're not mine—that's the reason why I am giving you up. Do you think that if you were mine, that if you longed to go through life with me, as you long to go through it with her now, I would give you up so tamely ? Not I ! Not if I had to be burnt at Southampton for it ! But since you are hers in love, and mine only in friendship, why should I kick against the pricks ? "

" Only a big nature like yours could look at it that way, Hestia."

" There is not really anything big about me, Roger, except my heart."

She saw that he was about to say something.

" Not in the way in which you mean, you dear enthusiastic boy. I'm talking about my pluck. I determined to make the best of everything—to take happiness where I found it, and to harness events and drive them my way. And therefore I've had nothing but happiness from your friendship, though it will soon be 'back with the Reserves,' as you soldiers would say."

" Do we ? I'm too young a soldier to know."

" Mr. Sylvester, who was at Oxford when Haig was there, says so," answered Hestia, with mock gravity, manufacturing an old lady's argument.

" That settles it," said Roger, laughing. He thought she was serious.

She turned serious when she said, " But one thing I want you to promise me, Roger. If ever what has passed

between us comes to Grace's ears, though it only could come through some witness whom we have not recognized, you must tell her that I thought you had passed from her life when I took you into mine, and that when I learned that you were still hers, I sent you back to her of my own free will."

"Indeed I will, Hestia. No one shall ever say a bad word of you in my hearing unchallenged by me."

"Oh, you needn't run tilts on my behalf, Roger, except with Grace. It might bring about the catastrophe which I hope you will escape. But if she opens the question, let her know that I have not been her enemy, but her friend."

By the time that luncheon was over, and they were on their homeward trudge, they were back to happier times. But that night searched both their hearts.

Roger was committing the supreme foolishness of writing (and he was the merest schoolboy at composition) his confession of her nobility to Hestia. Himself he could only see in the basest light. With a want of humour which brought a smile to her sad face when she read it, he promised her that he would repent. And Hestia was a very sad woman. She passed a night of weeping. She was giving up the thing she loved best in the world. She did it gladly, for all her tears, because she was doing it to make the man, to whom she was so devoted, happier. If she was forced to immolate herself to do this, what did it matter? Roger's happiness must come first, whatever else happened, and there was, unfortunately, no uncertainty in which direction that lay. She was doing this for him, though she would for ever cherish his image in her heart, when he was hers by his own code.

That the misery into which she was plunged, though she put such a bold face upon their parting, would last, she did not expect. It was not her nature to remain in the depths, especially when the triumph of her life, professionally, was at hand. She would soon be in a gay London whirl, in which she would have no time to think—or, at any rate, would only be haunted by the image of her soldier-lover in the watches of the night.

CHAPTER XXVIII

ANTICIPATION

WHEN Roger got back from his walk in the afternoon, he telegraphed to Grace that he had got leave till Saturday morning; the Regiment was not leaving until Saturday night. She took it to mean no more than the words expressed, but he sent it to his conscience as much as to her. It was to clear himself of the reproach of her receiving as an acceptance what was in truth only a subterfuge.

He also telegraphed to his mother: "Congratulate me. Grace is going to marry me before I leave for France.—ROGER."

She telegraphed back: "Lieutenant Wynyard, Hotel Louis-Philippe, Kingsburgh, Surrey. Best congratulations. So happy.—MATER."

When Roger reached Kingsburgh Station at seven-thirty on the Thursday morning, he was a different man. As soon as he had finished the letter to Hestia, which took him two or three hours of painful effort, he dismissed his cares in his wonted way, and went to bed, after writing his name on the Boots' slate to be called at half-past six.

His head had only been on the pillow for a few minutes before he was fast asleep, making up for the vigils of the previous night, and he slept on till he heard the Boots' knock, and sprang out of bed to run to his dug-out, because the knock had started the dream that he was in the firing-line in France, and that the enemy gunners had located him, and shells were bursting all round.

Finding that it was only a hot-water attack, he turned on the electric-light, and proceeded to shave, and found himself at the station with the largest margin of time for taking his ticket which he had achieved since he came to Kingsburgh.

He did not smoke in either the Underground or the Tube, and he walked as if he had wings from Russell Square to New Bedford Place. He was there so early that breakfast was not ready, but almost immediately after the servant had shown him into the breakfast-room and closed the door, he heard the rustle of a lady's skirts—it was not the servant, he was sure—and saw the door opening again.

A thrill went through him. It must be Grace, who would be his wife before many hours were over, coming to welcome him on that last morning of her maidenhood.

But when the door was thrown back, there entered not Grace, but his mother.

"Mater!" he cried, with double the delight which Grace's apparition could have caused, and as soon as he had embraced her, he added, "How on earth did you get here?"

"By train, dear—we have no Zeppelin service at present."

"I know that, you darling, but I want to know how you managed to get a train that landed you here so unexpectedly?"

"I came by the very same train that you did. The very same Mr. Ebbutt motored me to the station, and I had nearly six hours after I received your telegram for packing my modest luggage, so you see that I have not achieved anything very wonderful."

"The wonder is your being here."

"And where else should I be, on my son's wedding-morning?"

"It was ripping of you to come! How smart you look!" he said, turning her round admiringly.

She was, in fact, a very elegant woman, who had preserved her good looks so well that she looked more like Roger's sister than his mother. She did not, now that she was vegetating in a parsonage, allow herself to forget the

days when she had made her debut in London as an Earl's daughter, and had been the beauty of the Viceregal Court.

"So Grace is going to marry you, after all ! And before you start, Roger ! What made her change her mind ? "

"Haven't you seen her yet, Mater ? "

"No, she isn't down yet."

"Oh, I know what I meant to ask you !" interrupted Roger. "How did you find your way here ? How did you know where to come to ? How did you get the address ? "

"Very simply. They gave it to me themselves, to see that their letters were forwarded to them."

"So you forwarded yourself when you got my telegram ? "

"Exactly."

"Well, it's the nicest thing you have ever done in your life, Mater, and you've done a good many."

At that moment Grace came in, and embraced the mother-in-law-elect, who had been a mother to her, with great affection.

"They told me that you were here," she said. "It was lovely of you to come. I was in my bath when you arrived, or you would have seen an apparition."

"I got your telegram," she said, as she bestowed a sedate, ungrudging, wifely kiss on Roger. "It was a good thing you could not come. I had so many letters to write for dad about the meeting. . . . I hear dad himself coming now."

Mr. Lorraine appeared, looking as if he had never had a care, though he had had a difficult meeting with the lawyers, taking up the greater part of the day before. He was just going to greet Roger, when his eye fell upon Lady Cynthia."

"How delightful of you to come, my dear Cynthia ! Did you get a letter from Grace telling you about the marriage ? She ran out and posted it herself on Monday night."

"No, it was Roger's wire which brought me."

"What a mercy that he telegraphed, or you would not have known anything about it until it was a *fait*

accompli, and I wouldn't for the world have had that happen!"

Mr. Lorraine had old-fashioned ideas of courtesy, and would never have forgiven himself for a breach of them.

"And how are you, my son?" he said, turning to Roger. "Your being up in such good time for your marriage is a good augury for your wedded happiness!"

"What a lovely gown you have on, Grace!" said Lady Cynthia, fingering the fine cream moleskin of the coat and skirt with a well-bred woman's delight in a beautiful fabric, and inwardly thinking how sensible it was of Grace not to have bought a wedding-dress out of her present income.

"It's a new one which my dressmaker sent home after the smash came, so I never wore it. It was so out of keeping for a pauper—two of these would eat up nearly our whole income nowadays. So, since one must be married in a shade of white, and must be married in a new thing, I decided to make a wedding-dress of it. It had gloves and a hat to match."

Whatever its story, she looked absolutely lovely in it: it brought before Roger's eyes the spoiled child of fortune with whom he had been over head and ears in love ever since he left school.

A taxi took all four of them to Doctors' Commons, where, the fees being forthcoming, and both bride and bridegroom being supported by the sole surviving parent, no opposition was raised by the officials, beyond that twenty-four hours must elapse before the wedding was carried out, to allow time for any contravening circumstances to come to light.

"Now that we have got our permit," said Grace, "the next thing to do is to try and find a Church of England clergyman who is willing to marry us."

"His grandfather is in town," said Lady Cynthia, "staying at the *National Club*. When I wired to him that Roger was going to be married, and I was coming up for it, he wired back that I was to 'phone or wire him at the club as soon as I knew where the wedding was to take place, so that he might be present. He could marry the children."

The expression " 'phone or wire him " was a dreadful vulgarism on such an occasion to Mr. Lorraine, but he said nothing. Old-fashioned people sometimes know when to hold their peace.

While the license was being made out, Lady Cynthia slipped away and telephoned to her father-in-law to make arrangements to marry them on the next day at eleven.

She read the look of cruel disappointment on her son's face, and the annoyance on Grace's. Grace still thought that the world was made for her, and resented interruptions of her plans.

"Take Grace back to the lodgings, Roger, and try to console her till it is time for you to take her to lunch at some nice place. I'm going with Uncle Henry down to Winchester by the eleven-thirty train. He has to go over St. Cross again before Mr. Ebbutt and he can get on with the work at the monastery. We shall be back in time to dine out somewhere and go to a theatre. Our train back gets in at six."

"Why, Mater," said the grateful Roger, "you'll only have about an hour there!"

"It is all he needs, and there's a restaurant car on the train."

Roger obeyed, unconvinced but eternally grateful. Grace's attitude in the taxi was to be the old Grace, Roger's chief companion ever since he was a child. She might have been welcoming Roger back from the war, she was so glad to see him after their parting.

The sitting-room which Madame Barbensi had given up to them was sufficiently cheerless. It was very small, and most of it was taken up by an office-table with a roll-over top and very secure locks—a necessity for her accounts and cash. There was just room for a chair in front of the table, and a hard-hearted lodging-house sofa, on which Madame rested after lunch, in front of the fire.

Roger and Grace took possession of it as if it had been the most luxurious sofa at the *Carlton*. It was their own, and they were secure from interruption until the train brought their parents back from Winchester.

Roger, up to this, had not seen Grace alone, except in

a taxi in broad daylight, since he was freed by Hestia's generosity from the reserve which he had been compelled, by the horror of his position, to impose upon himself and Grace.

Would she let him relax that reserve now? he wondered. Or would he suffer the punishment which he felt that he deserved?

She answered every doubt without a word, by the way in which she put her lips to his, when he had closed the door, and taken her in his arms to kiss her.

After her first virginal embarrassment she sat on that inhospitable sofa with her soft fair cheek leaning on his shoulder, and her glittering hair against his cheek, in perfect content. If he could have seen her face, he would have noticed that her exquisite mouth was half-opened, and her long lashes were drooping over her violet eyes, like a sleepy child's. She was like a child in her happiness. Her simplicity was her greatest charm.

Little by little the delighted Roger found that it was simplicity which had made her write that letter; that she had suddenly realized that her dearest friend was going to the firing-line, from which he might never come back, and wished to be his wife, if it was only for a day; that she had no *arrière-pensée*; that she craved for honest, down-right affection as a child would crave for it.

And this was the woman who for at least five years past had refused one great match after another, and had ruled lovers out of her life, partly as a devotee of the open air, and partly as a devotee of the higher life, which makes a religion of the Arts.

It was her great simplicity which had made her write and speak so abruptly; which had made her tolerant or ignorant of the evasiveness with which he had met her proposal until he had found the opportunity of consulting with Hestia; which had made her ignore all the oddnesses of his behaviour. She wished to be his wife while there was yet time; she could endure much to achieve it.

The two hours before lunch flew like the crimson and gold of sunset. He was chivalrously delicate in his caresses, and she poured out her heart to him.

To Grace, after half a year of poverty, it was delightful to be taxi-ing and going to a famous restaurant as the *fiancée* of the young giant in khaki beside her. To be with an officer at the *Savoy* in war time as his *fiancée* is a joy to any properly-constituted girl, and Roger already was such a typical soldier.

In spite of Roger's entreaties, for she was so dazzlingly fair in it, she had insisted on changing her dress the moment she got in.

"I have no other new frock to be married in, and it's so unlucky to be married in an old dress."

"Just as if it could make any difference!" he said. "I don't believe in superstitions!"

"The waiter might spill something over it," said Grace sagely. "And I could not be married in a stained dress, anyhow."

Roger was more frightened of the waiters than he was of Fate, so she changed into a gown, hardly less lovely, and almost new (though it, too, had been bought in the previous spring), which she had brought up for the express purpose of going about with him.

Much as she enjoyed the *Savoy* and the pretence of being rich again, she went back without a murmur to that converted pantry in Bloomsbury. It was a moment when no palace in the world could compare with guaranteed solitude in a garret.

"Go and sit down while I run to my room and take my hat off."

"Can't you take it off here?"

"I have to be more careful of my clothes than that, nowadays."

He went in, and taking off his belts, tossed them down on Madame Barbensi's chair, the only flat surface in the room which would be unoccupied when Grace came back.

Then he seated himself on the sofa, back to the door—that was the uncomfortable end—and listened for her footsteps.

She stole in—he had left the door open—and he pretended not to hear her. She closed the door behind her very gently when she saw that he had not looked up,

and tip-toeing up to the sofa, threw her arms round him. He caught her hands fervently, and when he turned his head round to meet hers, thought that he had never seen anything so beautiful.

“Come and sit beside me, you Three Graces rolled into one,” he said.

As she obeyed him she thought of the day when as a schoolboy new to Latin he had discovered that her name was a title in Roman mythology.

“What shall we do after we’re married?” he said.

“The war’ll have to end before we need think of that.”

“No—I mean to-morrow, when the old man has finished with us.”

“Oh, hush, Roger! You mustn’t talk of it like that.”

“Well, I suppose we shall have to do something?”

“Sufficient for the day is the evil thereof.”

“I don’t see where the evil comes in.”

“I do. It’s quite bad enough that we aren’t married already without thinking what troubles to-morrow may invent for us.”

“Well, I want to think about it, because it’s so lovely—I mean the idea of being married to you. I vote we just sit indoors—in a better room than this, of course.”

“Well, I vote so too. We shall want to have as much as we can of each other before you go to France.”

“Let’s pretend that this is our last afternoon?” he suggested.

“No, that’s unlucky,” said Grace. “If you meet misfortunes half-way they’ll always come.”

“Well, be as nice to me as you’ll be on our last day.”

“Yes, I’ll do that gladly. I want to be as nice as I can to you from this minute forward, to make up for all the years we’ve wasted by not being married to each other.”

“And can I tell you if you’re not being nice enough?”

“Teach me my lessons? Oh, yes, you big baby!”

“Pretend now that you’re going to give me the last kiss.”

“Oh, Roger, don’t be so ill-omened!” she pleaded; but she obeyed him, and the desire and the pathos in her pleading gave her kiss the desire and pathos which he craved to see without any pretending from her.

"And now, Roger, stop this gruesome game, and let me give you the kiss of a girl who has won the lover she wants after knowing him for years."

He slipped his right hand lightly round her right shoulder, and took her left hand in his left—the back of it into his palm—and took a swift glance at the lovely smiling mouth before he laid his lips on it.

"Yes, that is better," he said.

"Now, don't be ill-omened any more, but tell me about the times when you wanted to marry me most—that's what I want to hear to-day."

They went over them together—the many times when only her dread of disillusionment in the long years of the future had precluded them from such happiness as they were having now—all too short before the summons would come for overseas.

And they were still experiencing the delight of turning friendship into gold, in Love the alchemist's crucible, when they heard the ring and the footsteps in the hall which betokened the return of their parents.

Lady Cynthia just peeped in before she went upstairs to change for dinner.

"Grace has more sense than I credited her with," she said to herself, and she added out loud, "You'd better go and dress for dinner, Grace—we're rather late."

Grace bounded up; she wished to look her very best that night.

His mother was just asking Roger where they had better dine when a servant came in to say, "You didn't see the telegram that was waiting for you, My Lady."

"No," said Lady Cynthia. "Is that it?"

"Yes, My Lady."

It ran: "I want you all to dine with me at the Royal Automobile at eight.—HARVEY WYNYARD."

"That settles it," said Roger. "In any case, Grace would enjoy dining there better than anywhere else—it's a sort of Subalterns' Headquarters."

"It was sent off just after I 'phoned," said Lady Cynthia. "He must have thought of it directly he hung the receiver up. How shall we let him know, Roger?"

" 'Phone to the National—he's sure to be there from half-past six to half-past seven, so as to receive your reply. What shall I 'phone to him ? "

" Delighted," said Lady Cynthia Wynyard.

* * * * *

It was a full night at the Royal Automobile Club, full of handsome women of all styles, and fuller still of khaki-clad officers—men who were back from the front on leave, men who were back from the front never to fight again, men who were burning to go to the front, and men who were burning not to go to the front, but to remain in home-billets of a more or less arduous nature. Officers were there by hundreds.

Grace was delighted by the spectacle. This gay, eager, laughing crowd, many of whom were fresh from the hardest fighting at the front, was indeed an inspiring spectacle.

And Harvey Wynyard was resolved to do honour to the occasion—the double occasion of his grandson's marriage and departure for the front. He had never known the pinch of money ; he had a good living and a private income, and no great expenses down in Devon. He knew good wines, and he had ordered them, and a special dinner.

It was Grace and Roger all night. Innumerable were the allusions to the great occasion of the morrow.

Grace watched now her *fiancé*, now his grandfather. But for the war, looking at the stalwart septuagenarian, it would have been easy to prophesy a long life for Roger. With his nutty complexion and wiry frame, Harvey Wynyard looked as if he would live to see a hundred.

Grace sat between them and was glad to note that her father, whose hospitality had been so unbounded, was enjoying the fleshpots.

Roger, with a whole day in front of him before the day of embarkation, tried not to neglect the others for Grace, and was beaming with happiness and insouciance.

After dinner, when they were taking their coffee, he let his grandfather, who had seated himself beside him, pour homely wisdom and a little bit of muscular Christianity into his ear for half an hour. He had always been more

like a father than a grandfather to the boy. And then, while the giver of the feast was talking to Grace, Roger had shown his sunniness to his mother, and listened to her talking about his marriage, and events still more important and more solemn, for another half-hour. And then it was time for them to return to New Bedford Place, where their parents said a quicker good-night to him than Grace did, and went off to their rooms.

Grace herself, because this was the last time that she would ever have to dismiss him with her good-night, gave no great while to it, but after doing justice to the Romance of the occasion, said, "We must not be too tired for the great day," and, giving him an exquisite good-night, turned her reluctant feet to bed.

Roger would never forget the beauty of the upturned face, the surrender of the long lashes on her cheeks, the silent music of her lips.

CHAPTER XXIX

THE CARDS COME TRUE

AT six-thirty on his wedding morning Roger had precisely the same dream as he had had the day before—that he was in the firing-line in France, and that the enemy gunners had located him, and shells were bursting all round.

But this time it was not only a hot-water attack ; it was his servant, come to tell him that the Regiment, whose wagons had gone a week before, was leaving Waterloo for Southampton at 11 a.m., and that the Regiment would parade for their departure at nine forty-five. He said that he had packed up as much as Roger was allowed to take with him to the front, and had brought the rest of his things to the hotel to be sent down to Seacombe with what he had there.

Was there anything else that Roger wanted ? There was no hurry for himself. He was one of the fatigue party who were to stay behind for a few days, with Lieutenant Guinness, to clear up the camp.

“ Yes, stand by, and be ready to take a telegram to the post-office when it opens. What time does it open ? ”

“ To tell the truth, sir, I’ve never been there to see, but I daresay it is seven that it will be.”

“ I should think that it would be six,” said Roger gravely, “ if they have to give people their letters at eight.”

He did not know that the sorting-office was a separate affair, and, like his servant, he had never tried if the post-office opened early.

So he wrote out the telegram and sent his servant off with it.

"Miss Lorraine, 40, New Bedford Place, London, W.C. Sorry we cannot be married this morning. Have to parade for France at 9.45. Our train leaves Waterloo at eleven. Meet me there to say good-bye, dearest Grace. Love.—ROGER."

And on the back of the telegram, for the address of sender, he wrote :

"R. Wynyard, Lt. 20th Batt. East Surrey Regt., Hotel Louis-Philippe, Kingsburgh."

At eight o'clock, when he knew that she would have been called, he telephoned to his mother to say that the Regiment had been ordered off to France to-day instead of to-morrow. As he could not dress, get up to town, rout out his grandfather to marry them, get married and get back to the camp at Kingsburgh by nine forty-five, he would not make a futile rush up to town to say good-bye to them at their boarding-house, but instead of that, they would meet at the station. He expected that the Regiment would be there half an hour before their time—Regiments generally were half an hour early, he understood, to give the officers time to swear.

His voice on the telephone sounded absolutely cheery to her, and she was too good a mother to let hers sound otherwise.

"Shall I call Grace to the 'phone?" she asked.

"Yes, do, please!" he said eagerly. And when she came, after finding that she had just received his telegram, he began : "So sorry that we have to put our marriage off, old girl! But it's only postponed till the war is over. I'll marry you the very day I come back. Better luck next time!"

It was against Roger's code as a soldier, not only to say anything which breathed of disappointment when he received his marching orders, but even to feel it. His code said very definitely, "An Englishman must go to

his fate smiling when he cannot resist it, but must sell his life as dearly as he can."

Grace's thoughts flew directly to the day he had wasted for some reason which she had not understood, but what she said through the 'phone was, "All right, Roger, my husband. I'll marry you the day you come back, or the first moment you can manage afterwards. Good luck and safe return to you. We shall be at Waterloo by ten-thirty, and I won't disgrace you by breaking down. I'll 'stand by' as you call it for a minute, to see if you think of anything more which you have to say to me now."

"Nothing—but wait a minute! See if you can hear this."

At Grace's end it sounded like *fchitch! fchitch!* But Roger was not using his tongue at all; he was merely making the sounds with his lips.

The seeming futility of it might have been only another way of crying "Are we downhearted? No!"

But in another way Roger was woefully downhearted, for if he had not wasted that whole day before applying for the license, he would have been married to Grace by this time. Even in his bath the wheels of repentance had been grinding.

He not only had to dress and eat his breakfast, and be at the camp by, say, half-past nine, but he meant to say good-bye to Hestia somehow—and how he should do it worried him. For if he went to her house, the farewell, in view of all that she had done for him, must almost inevitably be a sentimental one, and honestly as he would have welcomed the sentiment if unaccompanied by actions disloyal to Grace, he did not think that it was playing the game to Grace to run the chance of it after the child-like affection and confidence which she had shown him yesterday.

But, while he was dressing, a solution of sorts dawned upon his slow man's brain. He would ring up Hestia's landlady, who must be about by this time, and get her to call Hestia to the 'phone. Then he could tell Hestia that the Regiment had sudden orders to sail a day before

they were expected, and talk to her for five or ten minutes in the spirit, while their weak flesh was separated by half a mile. They could speak out their real feelings on the telephone—there was a glass box for it in the hall at the hotel, and the telephone had a queer little room to itself just inside the front door at old-fashioned Fleur-delys House. Also he could suggest to her on the 'phone that she should come with the other inhabitants of Kingsburgh up to the wire fence round the parade-ground to see the Regiment off—a popular amusement with them, especially when it was one of their own Surrey Regiments. If she was there by nine-thirty, he would be able to talk to her for a quarter of an hour before he had to fall in. As he had been sleeping out of camp, he meant to be there a quarter of an hour before the time.

What more he said to her on the telephone must be treated as sacred. Roger was so grateful, so ingenuous, so downright, that he said things which Hestia would treasure until the end of her life.

Hestia, learning that he was not yet married, said less than she would have said, lest she should unsettle him in his duty to Grace. She repeated that she had nothing to forgive, and every word, every accent, showed that her friendship would be undying.

Long before nine-thirty she was at her post, with a red rose for England tied up with a sprig of rosemary for remembrance, wrapped in lead paper, which he was to open when he reached the front.

Outwardly they were gay and smiling, the woman dressed as carefully as she would have dressed for a wedding, the man mountainous in his fleece-lined trench-coat, with his revolver and his glasses and his haversack and his water-bottle slung round him.

They had to march from the Park to Barnes Station, where a special was waiting to take them to Waterloo.

The Colonel was already on the parade-ground, talking to one of the Majors, when Roger came on to it, the first of the officers who had been on leave. He was, the Major told Roger, in a fit about the officers who were on leave up in London, who could not, where their notices had to

be by telegram, receive them until something after eight. The telegram ordering the Regiment to start on Friday morning instead of Saturday should have reached the Colonel on Thursday night, but somebody through whose hands it had passed had not considered it urgent.

However, all of them were in their places a few minutes before the Colonel gave the word, "Regiment—'tenshun—quick march!" and the big drummer gave his three thumps, and the band, borrowed from the London Scottish, struck up the time-honoured marching-tune, so appropriate for a Regiment quartered in Kingsburgh Park—"The Girl I Left Behind Me."

To the woman who had been talking to Roger till the bugle rang out the "Fall in," the gallant old tune had a double significance. But she could not be sad, for the men, while they had been standing about in little groups waiting to fall in, had been ragging each other with their "Are we downhearted? No!" and the like, and the officers, full of "buck," had been chaffing the subalterns who had come back from leave in literally "such a devil of a hurry"—picturing the Mohammedan paradises from which they had been torn by telegram and telephone. They could not understand why Roger, the cheeriest "ragger" in the Regiment, should pull such a wry face over it when, at the sound of the bugle, he came up from where he had been talking to Hestia.

He had again, in the intervals of the high spirits of a Regiment's departure, poured out his gratitude and his appreciation of her generosity, and given her a little gold match-box, with the badge of the East Surrey Regiment on it, which he had seen in the window of a Kingsburgh jeweller when he left her to go back to his hotel after their farewell walk. It had taken a day to engrave, though the words were so few :

TO HESTIA,
From R.W., p.p.c.

Roger thought the p.p.c.—*partant pour campagne*—very clever. He meant *campaign* not *country*.

It was ecstasy to Hestia every minute that Roger was

with her, and it was hardly less ecstasy when the bugle sounded and he fell into his place on the right of No. 1 Company. The Colonel had given him the vacant lieutenancy in No. 1 Company (he had been gazetted a full lieutenant on account of previous service; oh, the irony of it after those dreadful weeks of training as a private!) because he was such a big, splendid-looking man.

And she was weeping tears of pride and excitement, not sadness, when the band struck up "The Girl I Left Behind Me," and the Regiment, with its packs and its trenching-tools and its water-bottles and its rolled-up overcoats and its slung gas-masks, took the right wheel out of the gates into the road, where a little crowd was waiting to march with a Surrey Regiment from its native heath, represented by Kingsburgh Park, to its entraining point, represented by the suburban platforms of Barnes.

The crowd half ran to keep up with them—Hestia in her wedding garment among them—and at very short intervals "The Girl I Left Behind Me" was followed by "The Lass of Richmond Hill," also not without significance to one person in that crowd, and the fine old Scottish air, to which at mess-tent sing-songs the words now run :

"Oh where, and oh where has my Hieland laddie gone ?
He's gone to fight the Boche for King George upon his throne!"

to enliven the heavy tramp through the muddy lanes.

And finally, as the train steamed out of the station for Waterloo, the brawny Scotsmen of the band blew out, with all the leather of their lungs :

"Soon to be in London Town,
Hieland laddie, bonnie laddie,"

and the men, craning their heads out of the carriages far down the line, heard the roll of the little drums, while Hestia, though her eyes were gleaming, was still in ecstasy.

Until the train was ready to start the men, "standing easy" on the long platform, were allowed to give vent to their feelings as they pleased. A few were saying good-bye to wives or sweethearts, or dandling their children, but for the most part their female belongings were at

Waterloo. Only the locally raised men were making their adieux here.

The rest gave three cheers for the Colonel—who had marched at their head on foot, his charger having gone on with the Regimental transport—and various senior officers, and at intervals chanted their “Are we down-hearted? No!” or sang the chorus of “Keep the Home Fires Burning.” But whatever they did was to the accompaniment of boisterous high spirits.

Hestia, who had managed to keep up, was able to chat to Roger all the time the Regiment was on the platform. The men were left to themselves until the Colonel gave the order to entrain.

A few minutes later Hestia found herself alone with a crowd on the platform. A week ago she would have kissed Roger before everyone.

At Waterloo the men were turned out to transfer into a main-line train, which was drawn up on the opposite side of the platform, awaiting them. There was nothing to prevent them transferring direct from train to train, but there was a quarter of an hour to spare, and the Colonel thought that they could say good-bye to their belongings more comfortably if they were “standing easy” on the platform. So he gave the order, and the belongings, which had been kept behind the barrier, surged in, the Lorraines and the Wynyards and the kith and kin of other officers among them.

Most of the officers had already deposited the paraphernalia with which the British officer has to adorn himself in action, on the seats of their first-class smokers, but Roger thought that his *fiancée* would like to see him in his fighting-kit, so he had not discarded his.

He kissed his mother and Grace, who was perfectly wifely about it.

“Well, what do you think of my war-paint?” he asked. “I would not shed it until you had inspected me.”

“Oh, my poor Roger, they treat you like a camel” said Lady Cynthia, with Eastern memories before her.

“I think you look splendidly serviceable,” said Grace, “but do you attack with all that weight on you?”

" You have to. You never know when you will get back," said Roger, not knowing whether you did or not. " And you have to wear a gas-helmet as well."

Roger began very dutifully—dividing himself between his mother and Grace—until his mother said, " Devote yourself to Grace. I like to look at you together and dream dreams."

Roger obeyed her with a big pulse of gratitude in his veins. He was all eyes for his lovely *fiancée*, and she was so wifely with him.

" Oh, Grace ! " he said in a low voice, " was there ever such a slip 'twixt the cup and the lip ? And to think of it—that if I had been free to get the license on Wednesday, we might have been husband and wife for a whole day ! "

" I can't tell you how I feel, Roger. It is like a direct thrust from heaven."

" I think it is more like a thrust from the other place."

" Hush, Roger ! I hate you talking like that."

" I'm awfully sorry, but it is riling, when one might have rushed the thing through if one had known what was going to happen."

" Oh, Roger, do you think you could have ? "

" I'm sure I could ! "

" Then it's cruel ! "

Cruel ! It was cruel. And the cruelty lay at his door. But he was paying for it, too, and more cruelly than she was.

" But don't let's worry about it, Grace. Perhaps it was intended for the good. If I was missing, for instance, it would be awful for you to be tied up, because you never could be certain what had happened till the end of the war ! "

" Don't frighten me so ! You'll come back all right, to marry and be happy ever afterwards."

" I mean to, dearest."

At this moment it struck Roger that he ought to introduce some of his brother-officers to his *fiancée*. He had hardly made the introductions when they heard the Colonel's voice, ordering the Regiment to entrain.

The officers stood about doing nothing while the men

were taking their places. Theoretically they were superintending, but the men moved in automatically, and Grace, not knowing that Roger was supposed to be doing anything, went on talking.

"What about Hestia, Roger? I was going to ask you about her."

Roger looked at her sharply. It was clear that she had no *arrière-pensée* in asking the question.

"I should like you to be tremendous pals with Hestia. You can't think how good she has been to me while I have been at Kingsburgh. It was she who worried Dartmoor into getting me my commission, or I shouldn't be going to-day."

Grace wondered if Hestia had been an unmixed blessing.

CHAPTER XXX

MR. DRYANDER BEGINS HIS VENDETTA

ROGER had been in France for many a week, and Proserpine, the Spring Goddess, had come up from below the earth, and was spangling the fresh green carpet of the woods with primrose yellows and hyacinth blues, and the blushing white of wood-anemones.

Down at Via Pacis things were moving quietly. The seasons were early there, and everything else late. Even the Middle Ages had died hard there, if indeed, they were dead, and not still living in Henry Lorraine.

But with the people who had gone forth from Via Pacis events moved faster. Dal Dryander had shown the cloven hoof. Not content with trying to swindle Hestia over her musical-comedy, he had wearied her with his attentions.

She might be, as he said, "the loveliest and most lovable woman in the world," but she had not moved his stony heart to the length of trying to treat her fairly. The fact was that, though Dal Dryander was willing to spend money prodigally on the indulgence of his pleasures and his vices, he could be exceedingly mean over making it.

It seemed incredible to him that a woman like Hestia, whom he considered to be much in his debt, should be deaf to his advances. He believed himself one of the handsomest and best-dressed men connected with the stage, and having an income which ran into five figures, he was willing to indulge her in any extravagance, if she would listen to his suit. He had diagnosed her as a

woman who, under certain circumstances, might fling conventionality to the winds.

Unfortunately, Hestia had Roger to compare him with, and considered him a mongrel foreign bounder, especially since she had not found him pleasant to deal with in money matters.

He had, also, made the fatal mistake of hinting that he might be pleasanter to deal with in this matter if she was more accommodating in other things, and had gone to the length of saying that she should not collaborate with him in his next musical-comedy if she did not alter.

This put her on her mettle. She did not wish to lose her newly-found prosperity, but Mr. Dryander was intolerable. Her lawyer, Mr. Skewen, advised her to approach an impresario named Ace, an Englishman, whom it had been the aim of the Rothenstein Agency to ruin. No singer on their list was ever allowed to appear at his theatre; no composer on their list was permitted to deal with him. But Mr. Ace was a capable man, and formed without any of the well-known stars, recruiting chiefly from promising singers who could not afford to pay the blackmail of the Rothenstein Agency, an excellent all-British company, and, since he had confidence in his own judgment, he produced pieces of unusual excellence by composers who had not yet made their name. He had begun his career by a thousand-pound prize for the best musical-comedy. All rights in the piece which took the prize were to pass to him, and he stated that he would be willing to buy any of the other compositions which were sent in if they appeared to be of sufficient merit.

He was deluged with pieces, a few of which were of outstanding merit. He paid over the prize at once, and bought two others at liberal prices.

So many people wished to see the thousand-pound piece as a curiosity that its brilliant merits became known, and a run of two years was the result. When this run was over, he produced the other two pieces. The first had had a decent run, and the second had begun well.

Wilfrid Ace was contemplating advertising a fresh thousand-pound prize—the first had saved several times

the amount in royalties, when he received a visit from a man who had played a leading part in "The War-workers," but had had a quarrel with Mr. Dryander and wished to be even with him.

Willie Jordan knew, as everyone else in the company knew, that "The War-workers" was not Dryander's music, but Hestia's, and he thought that the shrewdest blow which he could deal Dryander would be to get the new piece which Hestia had been writing put on at another theatre. Hestia had told him about Dryander's threat—not to collaborate in it with her.

"But why should you collaborate, Miss Myrtle? If Wilfrid Ace takes your piece, he'll give you a higher royalty than you get for your share at present, though it won't be as high as yours and Dryander's combined. He and his conductor will do the staging and touching-up themselves, so as to adapt it to their requirements. He likes his son-in-law to write the book, and scoop all the best things into a part for his daughter."

Hestia, without the least hope that anything would come of it, let him try, and to her astonishment it resulted in her music being accepted, on much better terms for her than she had enjoyed before, and with her name on it.

"When the time comes, it will be announced that you collaborated with Dryander in 'The War-workers,' and he can't deny it, because you have your contract to show."

Long before Wilfrid Ace produced "The C.O." Mr. Dryander had found out all about it, and was furious with Hestia.

"Is this the way you reward me for making your fortune?" he asked. "In common honesty, let alone decency, you ought to have given me the option of collaborating with you!"

"But, my dear Mr. Dryander, it was you who would not give me the option. You told me almost threateningly that if I wouldn't—shall we say, bribe you in a very undignified way—you would never collaborate with me again. I refused your insulting overtures, and I should go on refusing them for the rest of my life. It was only

when you had definitely announced your intention not to collaborate with me any more that, in self-defence, I had to look about for a new market."

" You ought to have known that I did not mean it, Hestia," he said. She could not resent his calling her Hestia because she had been Hestia to his household for years.

" *You did not mean it* if I could sell my music equally well elsewhere, Mr. Dryander, but *you did mean it* if I couldn't sell it without you."

" You shall rue it—you shall rue it!"

Hestia realized that she had made a very powerful and vindictive enemy in her musical career. But she hoped, with the aid of Wilfrid Ace, to survive his enmity, and did not worry about it. If "The C.O." was a success, her career would be tolerably secure.

But Dal Dryander did not propose to confine his efforts to crushing her in her work for the stage; he intended, if she would not respond to his advances, to damage her character irretrievably with the Via Pacis and Seacombe circles, which had formed her world for the past few years—or, if possible, to use any evidence which was found against her to blackmail her into complying with his desires.

Being very rich for a man of his limitations, he did not mind how much money he spent on ruining her, or breaking her spirit, and the most obvious way in which to do it was to employ a detective to collect evidence against her.

It was much easier than he expected. Hestia had no idea or intention of covering her tracks. The very first question the detective asked himself was: Why did a woman who seems fond of Bohemian life, when she first got back from the country, settle herself at Kingsburgh instead of in town?

A few questions to the landlady in the house where Dryander had enjoyed her hospitality elicited the fact that an officer from the camp in Kingsburgh Park came to see her nearly every day, and often spent several hours with her.

" Who was this officer?"

"Lieutenant R. Wynyard, of the East Surrey Regiment."

"Was there any evidence of improper behaviour on these visits?"

Nothing of this nature had been noticed, but they appeared to be on very friendly terms.

Thinking that they might be careful of their actions in a small and gossipy place like Kingsburgh, the detective transferred his attention to what they had done on the occasions when they went up to London.

These appeared to be equally colourless, except on the night when they went up for the "O.P. dinner to the Right Hon. D. Lloyd George."

On that occasion, as an employee of the Hotel Cecil—the commissionaire who calls their carriages and cabs for people—remembered, the people described by the detective were very much disturbed because there was no taxi to be had to take them down to Kingsburgh, owing to the traffic having been stopped on account of a Zeppelin raid. They eventually, he said, had left the hotel on foot, to see if they could get a train which helped them at all for Kingsburgh.

"What time was that?" asked the detective.

"Well towards twelve o'clock."

Then, Zeps or no Zeps, there was no train on a Sunday night, and if there was no cab to be got, they must have spent the night in London.

Having got thus far, he started out to examine all the hotel registers in the neighbourhood for that date. And at the very first hotel he thought of trying he found this all-important entry :

"Mr. and Mrs. Myrtle."

Roger, then, had posed as her husband!

He asked the hotel-clerk if he remembered these parties passing the night there, letting it be understood that the information was worth five pounds to him. The clerk remembered them perfectly; they were such a very good-looking couple and so charming in their manners, even to

this ungrateful sneak himself. They did not go away until about the middle of the next morning.

The detective had got what he wanted. After this, the minor information, like the presentation of the gold match-box, "To Hestia from R.W.," and so on, fell flat.

When the detective brought him the results, Mr. Dryander was no longer in any doubt as to why Hestia had repelled his advances. It was because she was having an affair with an officer, and even without the "Hestia from R.W.," and the badge of the East Surreys, there was not the least difficulty in proving that this officer was Roger Wynyard, whose attentions to her down at his home in Devon were well-known.

Having established the fact that she had passed a night at a hotel with Roger, the next thing was how to use it to her disadvantage? After due consideration he thought he might make Grace his tool in the matter.

All Seacombe and Via Pacis were aware that Roger was her *fiancé*, and that but for the Regiment being sent abroad a day before it was expected, she would by this time have been Mrs. Wynyard. She was obviously, therefore, the person most individually interested in Hestia's downfall, and there were two, to him, good reasons why he should make her his instrument. The first was that, far from having any compunction about shattering the dream of a beautiful *fiancée*, to whose father he stood under the obligation for the start in life which he had got from being on the Fellowship of Via Pacis, it was a source of satisfaction to him.

He had, according to his ideas, good cause for hating her. He was a great admirer of her aristocratic type of beauty. It did not inspire him with sinister designs, like Hestia's more passionate type, but it gave him gratification and pride to be frequently in the society of such a woman, and it would have helped him in what Americans call the "social climb," to have the run of the Manor House in the way that Mr. Sylvester and Hestia and the Count had it. When he became so wealthy, he expected that his money would give him this entrée, but Grace thought him a detestable bounder, and the wealthier and more

expansive he became, the less inclined she felt to tolerate his presence at the Manor House, except at fêtes, to which the whole community was invited.

He had therefore no compunction, and knowing by experience how uncompromising she could be, he had every reason to suppose that she would be equally unsparing to Hestia.

The next thing was, how should he convey the news to Grace ?

A very short reflection convinced him that Hestia herself had supplied him with the machinery, for in sending Mr. Lorraine's lawyer at Plymouth—Mr. Skewen—to him to draw up the contract for their collaboration in "The War-workers," she had sent him the very man for his purpose. Since the Lorraines had shown him so plainly that they were unwilling to admit him to their intimacy, it was obviously much better form for him to broach the matter through their lawyer than direct, and their lawyer was likely to be a great deal easier to convince than they were. So he told the detective, keeping his name out of the matter, to place the facts before Mr. Skewen. Mr. Skewen had a solicitor son in London who conducted his affairs there, a malformed creature who could not be called up for any kind of service in the war, and nothing was easier than for him to verify the evidence collected by the detective. The hotel was within a few minutes' walk of his office ; the hotel-clerk had no objection to earning more money ; nor had the jeweller's assistant who had sold Roger the gold match-box, and had it engraved for him. But the servant at Fleurdelys House, suspecting that the detective was trying to injure Hestia, stoutly refused to have anything more to do with him.

When Mr. Lorraine's solicitor had verified the facts, he felt it to be his duty to communicate them to Mr. Lorraine, to show him the kind of man his son-in-law-to-be was. It was true that he had pleasant and not inconsiderable dealings with Hestia herself now. But his prejudices about morals were as strong as his prejudices about *noblesse oblige* in business were weak.

Mr. Lorraine was altogether unwilling to move in the

matter. In an innocent way he was fond of Hestia, and Roger he loved better than anything in the world, except Grace—perhaps almost as much as Grace. And though he was a man of strait-laced ideas himself, he was opposed to exercising any sort of moral censorship over the Fellows of Via Pacis. He wished them only to be under their country's laws. Freedom was the essence of his schemes. Especially was he unwilling to lift his hand against a man who was fighting for his country, even if he had cherished no personal affection for him.

Mr. Dryander would not accept defeat. His first interview with the hunchbacked solicitor son had convinced one who was a fair reader of character that he was dealing with a man wholly lacking in the milk of human kindness, who cherished a grudge against the whole human race in revenge for his own deformity. So he paid him another visit to engage his services, for very heavy fees, against Hestia, whose business ingratitude in a matter with which the lawyer was acquainted was likely to cause Mr. Dryander a heavy financial loss.

This much was true—that Mr. Dryander was going to lose by Hestia's revolt. Mr. Skewen, junior, knew that. Beyond it he was going to make heavy fees, and knowing Grace, he regarded her with a hunchback's malevolence for the beautiful. It gave the creature a thrill of exultation to think that it was in his power to deal such a person as Grace such a stab. By his instructions, the detective, since he did not wish his own name to appear in the matter, wrote to Grace to say that he had evidence of her *fiancé's* having passed himself off at a hotel as the husband of one Hestia Myrtle, known, as he believed, to Miss Lorraine, who was in his company. He had come across the information, he said, in the pursuit of his business, and he wished to know what Miss Lorraine would be disposed to give for the proofs, to hush the matter up or proceed with it, as she chose.

CHAPTER XXXI

HOW GRACE RECEIVED THE NEWS OF ROGER'S INFIDELITY

HIS letter came upon Grace like a thunderbolt. She did not believe that it was true, and she had no intention of answering his letter. But the strong streak of common sense, which was in her, told her that the issue for her to decide was not whether it was true or no, but what she should do if it was true. Otherwise, it would always be hanging over her like an avalanche ready to fall.

The first question which she asked herself was, how could Roger, her *fiancé*, have indulged in this vulgar intrigue with Hestia? It was so unlike Roger, that Public-School Bayard. There must be something behind this, apart from Hestia's undoubted attractions and recklessness. That it had happened at all, assuming it to be true, hurt her horribly. She had no sex emotion herself, and could not understand a woman being betrayed into this sort of intrigue by the loss of her self-control. And Roger's code should certainly have been proof against such a temptation.

But apart from the paralysing accusation which had just reached her by post, she had, until that last long day which she and Roger had spent together, only too good reason to fear that all was not normal with him. She would never forget how Roger had rejected her offer of friendship and affection before he left Seacombe for the last time, or the cold, perfunctory way in which he had parted from her. She would never forget the evasiveness, the almost indifference with which he received the informa-

tion that she had changed her mind, and resolved to marry him—immediately.

What did this mean? What could it mean except that he had an intrigue with Hestia, which hindered him in accepting her offers, though she was the woman whom he loved? And what could the change which had come over him on the last day mean, except that in making up his mind between her and Hestia, he had loved her enough to give up his intrigue in order to marry her?

With her pure, high nature, she would never have dreamed of such a thing if she had not received that letter. But having received it, she was bound to review the recent events which had been so difficult to understand. She was disgusted ineffably: the mirror of her innocence was shattered; but what was she to do? She had already decided not to answer the detective's letter. Nor did she feel any more disposed to take Hestia to task, though she felt as if she could never again receive her as an intimate. As for Roger, she had given him her troth and her heart, and he was fighting the battles of his country in France, with his life in his hand every minute. Clearly she must write nothing to depress him, or shake his confidence in her. There must be a Peace of God while he was fighting.

Nor could she consult with anyone. Her father, above all, must not know it, for, coming after the other shock, it might bring down his grey hairs in sorrow to the grave. And Roger's mother! What good could she do by killing Lady Cynthia's belief in Roger? It would not undo the evil which had been done.

No, there was no one whom she could consult. She must bear her cross alone.

She wrote her daily letter to Roger as if nothing had happened, though she went about with a dagger in her heart like the Mother of Sorrows.

What else could she do, when she received letters like this? :

“ — th, 1915.

“ MY OWN GRACE,

“ I am writing this letter in the trench, so you must not mind its being in pencil and half washed-out.

This is no picnic, I can assure you. It's not bad when the Boches are attacking, though we only have a quarter of the men we ought to have to hold the trench, and no reserves ; and you know that if your thin line breaks, they will be into Calais in just the time that it takes them to cover the ground when there is no one to stop them.

" I have a rifle like the men. I was a pretty good shot at Rugby. I suppose I could have got into the Bisley VIII. if I hadn't been playing cricket.

" It's splendidly exciting, standing in a not very good trench, with the Boches coming at you in masses—linked arms, and all that sort of thing—and knowing that if you can't keep them down with your rifle-fire, it's all up with the First Army Corps. Machine-guns could do it easily, but we only have four where we ought to have a hundred, and they're almost worn out. But so far we've managed to hold our own, though we've had to use the bayonet once or twice, when they got right up to our ramparts. The men like that. The difficulty is to keep them in and make them use their rifle-fire when the Boches get anywhere close. With anything like the same numbers—even when they're two to one they can't stand up to our men with the bayonet. But if we lose one man to their two or three, as we have to when it comes to the bayonet, we haven't got enough men to spare. They out-number us ten to one at this point.

" Still, I must say that I enjoy the fighting. I came out here to fight. I wanted to go into the Army to fight for England. It's the rest of it that tries me so. It's always raining when it's not freezing ; it's always cold ; there is always a wind cutting through you ; you're always ankle-deep in mud and water, except when you're knee-deep. The trench isn't deep enough, because you get to water if you dig deeper, and we've no proper communication trenches. When we're relieved, we have to struggle across fields where the shrapnel falls like rain, and our caps don't stop shrapnel. We ought to have helmets like the Germans. There's such a lot that might be done if Kitchener was out here to do it. The men say that he's A 1 at that sort of job, and that even old Buller wasn't bad at that in the

Boer War. But the men that we've got here, do nothing to economize lives and health, except give you full rations. They say that no army ever was so well fed. Personally I don't fancy their food much, but anything's good enough for me when I know that I'm doing my bit, and thank God, I'm doing that at last !

" As this letter is going to be censored by one of our own chaps, I can't put in the love, but it's enough for a whole Army Corps, you darling Grace.

" From your husband that ought to be,

" ROGER."

No, she could not write anything to dash Roger's cheerful acceptance of the grim fare of war. She did nothing, but the hunchback was not going to abandon his prospective gains without a struggle. Under his instructions, the detective wrote to her, enclosing his evidence, saying that she could return it to him with her offer. This was an unusual piece of confidence, but he was receiving adequate remuneration, apart from its sale, though he hoped that this would largely increase his profits.

The hunchback was not working to blackmail Grace ; he was working to ruin Hestia by making Grace her enemy, and to do this it was necessary that Grace should know the facts, whether she could be induced to pay for them or not.

Grace did read them, and saw that the intrigue was a fact—that was proved up to the hilt. But she returned them to the sender without any answer, or anything to show that she had read them.

After a sufficient interval, without any reply from her being elicited, the hunchback wrote to her himself, that as the son and representative in London of her father's lawyer, he considered it his duty to inform her that Detective Shapley had placed the information (which he herewith sent back to her) in his hands. He begged her to read the matter carefully, and instruct his father, her family's solicitor, as to what she wished to have done in the matter.

Grace wrote at once to the elder Mr. Skewen, enclosing his son's letter and the detective's notes, and begged him

to take measures to prevent his son troubling her any more in the matter. She did not wish to know anything about it, she said, and so far as she was concerned, the incident must be regarded as closed.

Mr. Skewen, senior, although his Puritan warp filled him with implacable resentment against Hestia, wrote an exceedingly stiff letter to his son, in which he said that if there were any more instances of his writing to one of their clients direct, he would cease to be the firm's representative in London. He also naturally informed Mr. Lorraine of what had taken place.

But Mr. Lorraine, though he was now aware that his daughter shared his knowledge of the intrigue, shrank from discussing such a subject with her.

Grace had a heavy burden to carry in those days, when she was writing loving letters to Roger with a fox gnawing at her heart.

CHAPTER XXXII

A LETTER FROM ROGER

GRACE was glad that she had held her hand from worrying Roger because his next letter showed how even his hardiness and pluck were tried. It was not censored, having been brought home by a wounded officer, and posted under cover in England. In it he wrote :

“ This place is getting pretty awful. We don’t get any sleep—that is, most of us don’t. I’m better than some, for when the Germans do let us alone, and we lie down on the wet and muddy ground, I can go to sleep for whatever time they give us, and I’m one of the very few who can. And I don’t get colds by all this exposure. All I get is sore heels by my boots sticking in the mud, and having to be lifted up for every step.

“ But the mud is only the least of the evils. We are so short-handed that we often have to go without food for twenty-four hours at a stretch. For even if the transport can bring up enough wagons to get anything through except ammunition, there is no one to cook it, or distribute it, for every man has to be in the fighting-line. And you can think of what that means when you never get relieved. Being four to one makes the Boches so aggressive that you never know where to look for them. They hide in our lines, and creep out and do our men in if one or two or three of them are trying to sleep, and none of their pals are near. They snipe us from trees—

anything over a hundred yards off. They come up and dig-themselves-in not half that distance from our front trench, so that they may rush us as they rushed a battalion of the Gordons which held this trench, a very unhealthy spot, two before us.

"I don't know what we should do if we hadn't got a devil of a Major who has the eye of a hawk, and more lives than a cat. Every morning he turns his glasses on the trees, spots a few snipers, and then picks up his rifle and does a bit of big game shooting. You see them drop like that leopard in 'The Early Days of Salisbury.' I don't mean the Salisbury near the place where they make bacon, but the *pukka* Salisbury in Mashonaland. And it's the same thing when they are dashing across a few yards of open by day, to get into the trench they have dug right under our front sandbags. He drops them like rabbits. You'll be surprised to hear that they come in by day, but they simply have to, because none of them will stay in that trench at night. He has put the . . . so" (here Roger had used some expression which he thought would not do, and had scratched it out without substituting anything). "I went out with him the only time he let anyone go with him—we simply took trench daggers and our revolvers, which we were not going to use till the last extremity, because it would spoil the fun. He wouldn't let me go beside him; I had to keep three yards behind, as near as I could by ear. We both crawled on our stomachs in the mud. Every now and then I heard sounds which made my flesh creep. It was the Major doing somebody in. He's a 'dug-out,' and he learnt this business from the Redskins when he had a ranch in the Sioux country. My instructions were to do nothing unless he got into a nest of them, and they put up a fight or ran. I thought I should be scared to death, but I wasn't. It made such demands on one's sporting training that I was too interested to be frightened, though that noise made my flesh creep each time. It made no difference that I knew my man was on the top. It was the awfulness of that kind of sudden death coming to anyone, even a Boche.

" Suddenly he struck several of them, and except the few we had time to deal with, they got up and bolted, we firing our revolvers into them. As they bolted they put up others. But our cheerful blighters bagged most of them, because when the Major goes out, they crawl up on the top of the breastwork, and lie flat, waiting to hear his revolver go off, and then jump down into the German trench. It's a great game.

" It's our only relief, for you can't think what it is like to be at it day and night for a month, with no one to take your place and give you a rest. They did send somebody up once, and we managed to drag ourselves back to a healthier spot. It took us two days to do it, and when we got there we found a lot of London Generals waiting to run us up again, because our reliefs were wanted further along the line, where some dismounted French cavalry had bolted without the Germans twitting it.

" Well, I mustn't grouse. I'm all right. I've got nothing the matter with me, except sore heels, while the Major, poor devil, has at least three things for which he ought to be in hospital, but he's not going to chuck it while he can keep free from a cough, which would spoil his trench work.

" You mustn't worry about me, Grace. One gets accustomed to anything—even to an avalanche of Black Marias which dig holes as big as our dining-room at the Rectory, followed by an avalanche of rifle-fire, followed by an avalanche of Boches, trying to rush your lines just as you are thinking of a little sleep. Even the ' Marias ' are a blessing in disguise, because we have no water here, except the rain which their shell-holes collect for us.

" Well, ta-ta. I'm sorry I can't accept your kind invitation to dinner to-night—especially so because we have had no grub here since yesterday morning.

" With as much love as we are getting ' hate, '

" Always your affectionate husband that ought to be,

" ROGER."

CHAPTER XXXIII

MR. EBBUTT GOES STILL FURTHER INTO THE MIDDLE AGES : THE FOUNDING OF THE NEW TAORMINA

MR. EBBUTT had by this time completely identified himself with Henry Lorraine's *Via Pacis* projects. His immense wealth, amounting to several millions sterling—he was one of the largest contributors to the British income-tax—made the expense a trifle to him, and the idea of restoring the ancient monastery to its pristine condition appealed extraordinarily to his romantic mind. It was a fresh incursion into the Middle Ages. He would have restored the Abbey church itself if Mr. Lorraine had suggested it, even at the sacrifice of that exquisite garden, but Mr. Lorraine had always held that any religious connection would defeat the purpose of the Fellowship.

He had made up his mind from the beginning that no feelings of false pride or false shame should keep him from visiting Mr. Ebbutt in the Manor House as freely as he would if it had never belonged to him. Mr. Ebbutt became the dearest friend whom he had ever had, for he was much more closely in sympathy with his projects than Harvey Wynyard had ever been, though the clergyman had been a hardworking trustee of the Fellowship, and had been the friend of all the fellows and their families. Henry Lorraine had lost a large fortune, and Mr. Ebbutt had made a fortune ten times as great, but they were by nature singularly alike, in spite of the difference of their birth and upbringing, and shared each other's tastes completely.

Grace still continued to resist her father's attempts to

draw her into the friendship. That such a mushroom should reign in the halls of her ancestors was to her unforgivable.

He on his part worshipped the ground she walked on. Her apparition on the day when he came to look over the place had decided him forthwith. The fact that she breathed the air of the same village sometimes filled him with a mild exultation, though she might have been living in Plymouth from the seldomness with which she was ever under the same roof as he was. But his prevailing feeling was one of the hope defered which maketh the heart sick, because he never seemed to get any nearer to an even ordinary acquaintance with her.

His third incursion was in the matter of a barn, which stood a few hundred yards north of the monastery, at the edge of the ancient apple-orchard which the monks used for making their cider, and which extended for half a mile above the south sands, the link between the town and Via Pacis. The apple trees, feathered with hoary lichen, were more picturesque than prolific. The orchard was grassed over like a meadow, and was used by Mr. Ebbutt for pasturing his dairy cows. The barn had not been used since the suppression of the Abbey, because the suppressors had taken off its roof to capture the monks who had taken refuge there. It was a beautiful Gothic building of the fourteenth century, cruciform in shape, nearly a hundred feet long, and perhaps fifty feet across the transepts. It was still perfect, with the exception of its roof, and its gables were finely adorned with niches, in some of which the little statues were still standing, though very weather-beaten.

Mr. Ebbutt had decided to restore it for theatrical representations. He had been at Glastonbury during the annual musical festival, and had determined to institute a festival of the same kind at Via Pacis, for reasons in connection with his building scheme.

It had struck him as waste that an institution like the Via Pacis Fellowship should be located in a small fishing village with inhabitants of limited intelligence. He determined to put up a model health resort, which would

confer prosperity on the fishermen and other original inhabitants of Seacombe, while it gave Via Pacis appropriate neighbours. He had learned with astonishment that Seacombe, which had a winter climate as good as Torquay, had no winter visitors, until an examination of the fishermen's cottages showed him the reason.

The village was built on the flat, round the harbour.

To give the place a winter season as well as a summer season, he determined to use his dairy meadows, which had hitherto been excluded from building. They were divided from the sands below them by much the same fascinating mixture of rock and wood as divided his own garden from the foreshore. This portion of the property he intended to convert into a cliff-garden for the new village, with a wide strip at the top to form a sort of garden-esplanade. The rest of the plateau he was going to cut up into streets, with building lots, which would chiefly be used for smaller houses, though no objection would be made to a purchaser buying several and running them into one for a better house. But these, he imagined, would chiefly be erected on the rocky hill above the plateau, because well-off people demand picturesqueness rather than convenience. He was willing to build houses on the time-payment system, to suit the purchaser's requirements as regards the accommodation, but the exterior of the houses had to be designed by his own architect, because they were all to be built after the various types of old houses to be found at Taormina, the said architect, a reputed descendant of Horace Walpole, having long cherished the ambition of getting some rich speculator to allow him to build a Taormina on the south coast of Devon.

Mr. Ebbutt was not a building speculator, but he was willing to finance Horace Jones in his project, when Mr. Lorraine had assured him that Mr. H. W. Jones was a competent architect, who had made a study of Taormina for many years. Building a Taormina supplied him with a more complete incursion into his beloved Middle Ages than he had contemplated in his wildest moments.

To show intending purchasers of houses what they

might expect, Mr. Jones was to be allowed to proceed with the street nearest the cliff-gardens, taking care to represent as many as possible of the types which were to be used, not forgetting a Palazzo Corvaia, and a convent of Santa Caterina, suitable for large boarding-houses or cheap hotels, but to be used in the first instance as sanatoria for wounded officers.

A feature of Mr. Ebbutt's new health resort was to be that on the plateau there should be no boarding-house or hotel which charged above certain very moderate rates. The expensive hotels were to be limited to the top of the hill, to which properly-graded roads would be made for the use of motor-cars.

Mr. Jones had his project thought out in every detail. Chief among these was the cost of building, a subject on which he was very practical. Remembering that a large number of the houses at Taormina are built of the rough stone of the place, which is very hard, faced with a durable rough-cast plaster, he had made a study of Italian rough-cast plasters, to find one capable of resisting the English climate. Having been successful in this, he proposed to build his new Taormina with the rough limestone of the Seacombe district.

The beautiful windows of Taormina Gothic, whose arches are very simple and inexpensive, would, of course, have to be made of a better stone, but these, when the war was over, he intended to import ready-made from a Tuscan seaport. The masons for starting the work were Sicilian refugees from Germany, who had been employed in building a Sicilian village for an exhibition in a suburb of Hamburg, and had been ill-treated because Italy would not join Germany in the war. Mr. Ebbutt offered them employment for the period of the war, and started his new Taormina in this piecemeal fashion, thoroughly in accordance with Sicilian traditions.

The new village, standing as it did on a plateau facing due south, with an amphitheatre of hill behind to protect it from northerly winds, and the great mass of the Giant's Head protecting it from the west, the stormy quarter in winter, occupied an ideal site for a winter resort. The

virtues of Seacombe as a summer resort had already been recognized by the lovers of the picturesque.

Mr. Ebbutt, who had built a model city near Cincinnati for his thousands of workmen, formed most ambitious plans for rearing his new Taormina on the hillside, and for the exploitation of Via Pacis.

In the first place, he intended to make his new town a model health resort. He would not only regulate the prices for board ; he also meant to assure the hotel-keepers and pension-keepers of a supply of fish and poultry, fruit and vegetables, at very moderate prices, while assuring the prosperity of the people who produced them by starting a depot which took all they caught or produced at a fixed price, to be sold in a market at a small fixed profit.

The fishermen and the agriculturists would be better off than they had ever been, and the consumer would get what he required at a reduction in price of which he had never dreamed.

When the new Taormina was ready, visitors would find that the improvement in the accommodation at Seacombe was equal to the improvement in the markets. The houses were to be let at a moderate rent, but there was a proviso in the lease that there should be a fixed tariff per room for visitors, in each grade of house, and the houses, like their prototypes in Taormina, were to contain no rooms which were not of a good size, and with adequate windows.

Mr. Ebbutt, who had made his model town near Cincinnati a success, paying far higher rates for labour and materials, was not afraid of what this experiment was costing him.

Mr. Ebbutt had never been in Italy. In laying out the new Taormina he had to use the eyes, the experience, the imagination of Mr. Lorraine, who, having lost a fortune while he was playing with his Fellowship of Via Pacis, approached his new task with passionate interest, and had some fresh enthusiasm about it for Grace's ears at every meal. And Grace, though she was unwilling to go and hang about the rising town with her father and Mr. Ebbutt and the architect, was full of questions about it.

The thing which interested her most was the open-air theatre, in which Horace Jones hoped to reproduce some of the great effects of the immortal theatre at Taormina. He thought that the horseshoe-shaped hollow on the extreme right of the hill behind the town could be scooped out into a suitable auditorium. Mr. Ebbutt fully intended it to be used for open-air plays.

The stage was, of course, a simpler matter; that had to be built up on the plateau, and there was plenty of old red sandstone in Devonshire. Everything seemed all right. The architect had begun to talk rather largely about it, when Mr. Lorraine, who was not quite satisfied in his mind, took the plans home to show Grace, the only person at Via Pacis, except himself, the architect, and Mr. Sylvester, who had ever seen the theatre of Taormina.

Grace put her finger on the weak spot at once. The glory of Taormina is the view of the Strait of Messina which the spectator sitting in the auditorium has as a background for the stage. The spectator seated in the auditorium of Mr. Jones's theatre at Via Pacis would not, behind the stage, see the splendid mouth of the inlet, between the two great capes, tremendous bastions built by Nature of giant boulders of basalt. All he would see between the columns at the back of the stage would be the local golf-links.

Moreover, as he would be looking more or less east, he would have his back to the sunset effects between the two great capes.

Mr. Lorraine took the plans home at lunch. That afternoon, when he was taking them back to the Manor House, where Mr. Ebbutt and the architect were awaiting him for a further discussion, and final approval of the plans, Mr. Ebbutt was astonished to see Grace, who had never entered the house since he took it over, accompanying her father.

She greeted him, too, with something like cordiality, and asked if she might talk Sicily and the open-air theatre to the architect.

“Why, yes,” said Mr. Ebbutt. “You’re the very

one we want to hear, considering as how you've seen it, and your puppa has seen it, and Mr. Jones here has seen it, and your puppa and Mr. Jones are not quite agreed. What is your decision?"

"Well, I think it ought to be on the very left of the hill instead of on the very right."

"Impossible, my dear lady, impossible!" said the glib Mr. Jones. "I've considered that point already. But the slope of the hill breaks off too soon; you couldn't get the horseshoe for the auditorium."

"Have you ever been to Segesta, Mr. Jones?"

"Yes." He said it rather with the air of a professor whose statement has been challenged by one of his class.

"Don't you remember that the architect of the theatre there had the same difficulty before him as you have?"

"Did he?" he said loftily.

"Yes, of course he did, and met it—partly by throwing up a mound, and partly by that great containing wall."

"Is that so?" asked Mr. Ebbutt.

"Oh, yes," said the architect off-handedly. "But I didn't wish to put you to that expense for nothing."

"Expense, I told you, young sir, does not come in, if it is not for nothing. That doesn't sound much as grammar," he said, turning to Grace, "but if you can show me any good reason for putting the theatre at that end of the hill, expense isn't going to count."

"Well, do you think that the Greeks, if they had had the chance of putting that theatre where the stage would have the two capes and the open sea and the sunset for its background, would have put it anywhere else, Mr. Jones?" She had addressed him again, because she saw that Mr. Ebbutt wished to hear them argue it out fairly and squarely, and not to be defered-to himself.

"I hadn't thought of the sunset," admitted Mr. Jones, who had spent so many years in the study of Taormina.

"Do those I-talians we're employing know anything about this mound-and-wall business, Mr. Jones?" asked Mr. Ebbutt.

"Oh, yes—they're doing it all the time at home."

"Then I guess we'll have to do it here—that's settled."

The architect was accustomed to these interferences from Mr. Ebbutt. Mr. Ebbutt, after all, had successfully created a town of several thousand inhabitants, and since he confined himself to practical questions, such as site and expense, there was nothing to ruffle professional dignity in it.

Added to which, he knew that Grace was right. Her instinct for the correct site was unerring. As a reward for confessing himself wrong, he hoped for the constant presence of this lovely woman while he was laying out the theatre. He invited it on the grounds that two heads were better than one in remembering "local colour," and Grace promised to come.

She even met Horace Jones half-way, by saying: "Before you begin-on my suggestion, we might call in Mr. Sylvester—he knows Sicily inside-out."

CHAPTER XXXIV

MR. EBBUTT'S PLANS FOR THE NEW TAORMINA AND AN ARTHURIAN OBERAMMERGAU

HERE at last was a common ground on which Mr. Ebbutt could hope to meet her. On the first day he had some hesitation in coming ; he did not feel certain if her amiability would have lasted. But she received him as if she were the interloper, and not he, and in the long intervals when the architect had nothing to say to her because he was occupied with calculations or getting practical details from Mr. Sylvester, he found himself in *tête-à-tête* conversations with her.

His natural diffidence with ladies had served him well. While she was talking with the others he had been standing a little way off, following their conversation attentively, but not speaking until his decision was invited. When they left her for the first time, Mr. Ebbutt did not come nearer to her to take their place, but stood where he was, and followed the architect's movements with his eyes, until Grace addressed him with some observation which was perfectly futile in itself, but was a signal of amity—the moment for which he had been waiting for many months.

After a few minutes of mutual politeness, she said, “ You are doing a big thing here, Mr. Ebbutt. Tell me the general idea of it.”

“ My general ideas are : first, that I want this wonderful site to bring health and happiness to increasing numbers of people ; second, that the present village round the

corner is totally unworthy of the site, and not the sort of township in which the Fellowship of Via Pacis ought to be located; third, that I want the new town to go one better than any other new town in the world, and be an embellishment to the property—not an eyesore, as most new health resorts are."

"All excellent ideas."

"I advertised for an architect to carry out this notion, and Jones here seemed to have the best scheme to offer, so I engaged him. He had been hawking round this idea of erecting a Taormina"—he pronounced it Tar-miner—"in England as the bee in his bonnet, but he could not find anyone who wanted to build a town, except at Bootle, where the conditions were not favourable for a Tar-miner. But when I found that Tar-miner meant the Middle Ages, I agreed to close with him right there, if his references were satisfactory."

"You are not putting it up purely as a building speculation to improve the property which you have bought?"

"Not at all. I don't expect it to pay me for some years—if ever. But I have to have a town here for my own purposes, and I mean to have a top-hole one, the best thing of its kind that ever was put up."

"Tell me more about your purposes, Mr. Ebbutt?"

"Oh, that's a long story!"

"Never mind that," she said, feeling that she had a long leeway of ungraciousness to make up.

"Well, first I want to make life better all round for the people here, including myself."

"Yes."

"What do I find here? A place with a climate and natural aspects second to none in England. The Fellowship of Via Pacis, some living in the monastery, some, who have done better for themselves, with houses of their own scattered round. That's good. These people, the heads of the families, are all producing under special facilities something for the world—books or music or paintings, etcetera, etcetera. But there's no reason why they should be buried and I should be buried and Mr. Wynyard should be buried—shut up in a box with a

handful of fishermen who can just read and write—except for the few weeks when visitors come here in summer. This place ought to be residential, like Torquay."

"What do you mean by residential?"

"People living here all the year round—winter and summer. You could not have a better winter place than this in the British Islands."

"But, unfortunately you can't make people come and reside in a place!"

"That's just the point—you can! You've only got to prove to them that they can get more for their money, of just exactly what they want, from you than from anybody else, and they'll just flock round."

"But how are you going to prove it to them?"

"Advertise, ma'am, same as I advertised the 'common-sense china.' I'll have the advertysement of Vi' Pacis, the Devonshire Tar-miner—how do you call it?"

"Via Pacis, the Devonshire Taormina."

"Vi'pacis in one word, please—Vi'pacis, the Devonshire Tarmeener, with that barn—until there's a general view to preesent—on an eight-sheet poster, playcarded in every reasonable railway station in Great Britain."

"Why, the advertising will cost you a fortune!"

"I don't care what it costs me. I'm going on with it until the Devonshire Tarmeener is a paying proposition."

"I don't think I quite understand how you are going to make people come here, especially the sort of people you want."

"I'm going to give them something better than they can get elsewhere."

"But how? I mean, how are you going to make them see it?"

"In the first place, I'm going to give it them without leaving England, and they can't leave England till the war's over, nor after without more money than they'd have to spend here."

"Yes, but what are you going to give them?"

"A town to live in, a tolerable imitation of the other Tarmeener, the I-talian Tarmeener, in climate, in views—not so good, of course, but still, something—and as far

as Mr. Jones can make it, in the personal appearance of the houses."

"Yes, that's good, and undoubtedly there are some people who'll be attracted if they hear of it."

"But that's only the smaller part of it. I'm going to make it, in rent and food—two things which people who have to look at a shilling twice before they spend it have to regard most—the cheapest place to live at in England."

"Now that is something. But how are you going to do it?"

He explained his plans for regulating rents and prices for lodgings, and the acquiring and selling of market produce, so that food would cost the people who lived at the new Taormina about one half of what it would in any other town.

"But what will you do about drapers and grocers and shoemakers, and so on?" she asked.

"I will get a man down from Rochdale to establish a co-operative store, on the principle which divides the profits among the customers at the end of the year."

"Well, that sounds practical," she said. "That ought to bring people."

"It will, Miss Lorraine, it will! For the man with the small, fixed income, who needs a mild climate, will be able to live here on his remittance better than he could anywhere else in Great Britain. It's the people of gentility, who, because they are poor, have to live in such miserable surroundings, that I specially want to benefit."

"But is the whole place to be populated with them?"

"By no means. I want to make it the best health resort in England, where people can get tip-top advantages for small money—where the same sort of people who are rather better off, and can live all right, but are badly pinched for a good holiday, can lay out their money to the best advantage, because there'll be no profiteering. And the poor residents won't suffer by the place being full because I shall control all the food, and take no more for it than will make it pay expenses."

"I think it will be very successful on these lines, for the residents. But you will have a very long bill to pay."

"I don't think it, Miss Lorraine, but if I have, I have a ver-ry long purse."

"Tell me your other plans," she said pleasantly.

"Well, these people have got to be amused. I shall give them a library, a winter-garden, a gymnasium, a cinema-hall under my own control—there is a golf-course already, to which I shall add lawns for croquet and tennis and bowls. These things may be pretty ordinary in a health resort. But what I shall give them besides—and they wouldn't get in any other place of the kind—is a special theatre, in the old barn which I have had re-roofed."

"Theatres are difficult and costly things to run, and if you are founding your Taormina for badly-off people, the money they are able to pay for tickets would go no way towards keeping up the theatre."

"I don't expect it to. I guess I shall have to put up the money for that myself. It will take too long to tell you now about the plans I've made for giving them ordinary plays at ordinary times. But it will be in connection with an academy of the drama which I'm going to establish, for a sort of national scheme I have in view."

"National, Mr. Ebbutt? You take my breath away with the size of your projects!"

"I'm accustomed to size, ma'am. There isn't a town in the U-nited States or Canady which has a store that amounts to a row of pins where you can't buy my 'common-sense china.' I've thousands of agents, not only travelling, but located."

"What is your national scheme for the drama, Mr. Ebbutt? The last one was in connection with the Shakespeare Tercentenary."

"Well, what put it into my mind was that when I was motoring through Somersetshire on my way down to buy this place, I stopped at a place called Glastonbury, because there was an inn there that was four hundred years old—the guest-house of the old monastery, they told me. The whole town appeared to be upside-down, with a musical festival. I asked them why Glastonbury should have a musical festival, and they told me that the Holy Grail

was discovered there. Not being an *edicated* man, I thought it might be some kind of a microbe, but they told me that it was not so, but had something to do with King Arthur, and the festival had something to do with King Arthur, and Bernard Shaw, whoever he is. They seemed to think much more of Bernard Shaw being in the theatre, than King Arthur, so I took a ticket. I understood that the troupe consisted partly of the virtuous peasants of Glastonbury, like that German place which sounds something like 'ran over the cow.'"

"Oberammergau, you mean."

"Yes, that's it, but I couldn't get it until you minded me—and partly of 'star' actors. But I couldn't see any of either with the naked eye. There was no scenery to speak of, except a slot for children who wanted chocolates to stick nickels in, though I didn't see what chocolates had to do with King Arthur, except that there's a place called Cadbury in Somersetshire and King Arthur was in Somersetshire, and also King Alfred, but I thought it was cakes and not chocolates that they were cooking when the cook slang-whanged the King for letting them get burnt. Anyhow, they stuck a sword in the slot, and only King Arthur could pull it out, and the rest of the play hung on that. The music was 'future' they said, and the dresses were 'future,' and there was nothing else in it; there wasn't even 'future' scenery."

"That festival is really quite good. But you didn't like it, Mr. Ebbutt?"

"Like it? Christmas in jail!—how could anybody like a thing like that? But I was wrong in saying there was nothing in it, because it put into my mind what I am coming to. What's the name of that German place again?"

"Oberammergau."

"Oberammergau is sound, and King Arthur is sound, as an ancient British yarn, but they hadn't got on the right track about it. Instead of that music and comedy, they ought to have given a play upon King Arthur, made up from what Tennyson wrote about him—I've read it, in 'Stories from Tennyson for Children,' and I thought it

fine, almost like Gospel. They ought to have set the best writers and the best theatrical costoomiers, and splendid and beautiful actors and actresses, on to it, and produced something which would make the world gasp, like that Oberammergau business, using the natives for supers, as the people who looked on and wondered, while King Arthur and his Knights did all those things, which didn't all of them seem possible to me."

"I think you're rather hard on the humour of those people at Glastonbury, Mr. Ebbutt. If you're giving a costume-play . . ."

"There wasn't any costoom to speak of."

"Oh, no, costume-plays don't mean that—costume-plays only mean pieces whose scenes are not laid in our own time, but generally in Charles the Second's."

"With wigs and flopping top-boots? I know, Miss Lorraine. I'll pass costooms."

"Well, costume-plays, Mr. Ebbutt, must have a little humour to lighten them sufficiently for a general audience."

"Nothing easier, ma'am, in the case of King Arthur and his Knights of the Round Table. In the first instance, you might have a little table-turning. But if that won't do, because it's not sufficiently obvious to the audience with bad footlights, what's the matter with Sir Parsifal towing an air-balloon made in the shape of a dirigible, and introooicing another Knight, not on the register in 'The Mortuary' . . ."

"Oh, Mr. Ebbutt!" cried Grace, with tears starting from the outside corners of her eyes, "Not 'Mortuary'—'*Morte d'Arthur*'!"

"Well, that was as near as I could get it—and the name of that *noo* Knight is Sir Zeppelin, towing another air-balloon in the shape of a dirigible, and claiming to have reached the top-hole in that show? He and Sir Parsifal might have a sort of bolster-fight with their old air-balloons, in the style of the jester, Sir Drag-net, or some name of that kind, that I saw thumping people with a bladder at Glastonbury."

"Sir Dagonet!"

"Oh, that's all right—we needn't follow out the idea. There's great scope in it, if we must have humour."

"Oh, no," said Grace, still convulsed. "For heaven's sake, spare us that humour!"

"Why, certainly, ma'am. I was only doing it to oblige. Shall we decide to be serious now?"

"I think we'd better," she said with a sigh.

"Well, my idea is to have a dramatic festival here every year, in the month of August, when there will be most visitors here, to spread talk about it when they go home. The parts of King Arthur and his Queen, and her lover Sir . . ."

"Sir Lancelot."

"Yes, Sir Lancelot, and the other Queen and her lover . . ."

"Queen Iseult and Sir Tristram," she said.

"I suppose so, but I can't exactly remember—and any others whose names most people know . . . tell me some of them."

"Such as the Bold Sir Bedivere, and the traitor, Sir Modred, and a woman or two, like Elaine and the Lady of Shalott?"

"Oh, my hat! Did he know that shalot is a kind of onion?"

"Of course he knew, but his head was so much in the clouds that he never connected the two things."

"It's my fault. Well, just those sort of people must all be represented by beautiful young men and women, the best actors we can get from London, whose appearance is suitable—nothing middle-aged engaged for its voice. And in our little barn—if the weather is bad we must have the show in there—we'll have the scenery, all we've got room for, top-hole. But we'll hope that it will be fine enough to have it out in the Greek or Roman theatre, with the Saxon galleys sailing up the estuary—our fishermen friends will do for that, though they won't like their boats having dragons stuck on their fronts, and sails that look like blinds with a gale blowing in at the window."

"I think you're going to let a little humour creep in, Mr. Ebbutt."

"We'll trust to unconscious humour, ma'am—it's always the best."

"But what's the object of this King Arthur play, Mr. Ebbutt? If you thought the Glastonbury opera such a . . . such a . . . shall we call it a misfire?"

"I think it would be enough if you call it a miss-cue—actors are always talking about their cues." He continued quite seriously, "Well, it's just this, Miss Lorraine, I think they've got hold of quite the right idea in making the King Arthur *leegend* the business of the festival, especially there, where part of the very dust of the place came from Queen . . ."

"Queen Guinevere."

"Queen Guinevere's hair, as discovered by King Edward I., I think they told me it was. But they didn't make the best of it. That would have been the real place for a King Arthur Over—Oberammergau, or a King Arthur Louis-Parker-pageant. But they won't do it there; they want Glastonbury to be . . ."

"A Bayreuth, not an Oberammergau."

"So we must have our shot at making a national play of it, with professional actors and actresses for the romantic parts, and trying to train up the people of the place for the other parts. But the great point of all is that I want to utilize the talents of the Fellowship of Via Pacis in producing the play. I want its artists to paint the scenes, under the superintendence of one of the great scene-painters; I want one of its musicians to compose incidental music, and one of its authors to write the play each year. We mustn't have the same play every year—we might make a different 'Ideal of the King'—"

"Idyll of the King."

"—The subject each year, which would make a series of six, or perhaps eight, of them, and then begin again. And in this way we should be connecting the work of the Fellowship with the annual dramatic festival of Via Pacis, which would gradually become an institootion like the things at the Albert Hall—being combined with a very cheap holiday at the most beautiful health resort in England."

"I should think it might."

"At any rate, it would give the talent at the Fellowship its chance of distinguishing itself in those applied arts like scene-painting, which give a good living in these days of cinema-production to those who could never sell a picture. Confining the writing and the painting and the music to the members of the Fellowship will make it a genuine *Via Pacis* production, which will be another way of letting the world know of the work of the Fellowship."

"But I must have bored you stiff with my plans, Miss Lorraine—I won't add another word."

"Indeed you have not, Mr. Ebbutt, but your plans are so vast that I can't tell you what I think of them until I have thought about them a little more."

"Here's Jones," he said. "The trouble about Jones is that he talks over my head. I have to let him do what he wants to, and make him undo it again if it's not what I want. I wish you were my architect, Miss Lorraine."

"I?" She coloured painfully, and made an excuse and left him.

CHAPTER XXXV

GRACE EXAMINES HERSELF

HE bit her lip and stamped with rage as soon as she was out of sight and earshot. Why must he introduce the personal equation the moment that she relaxed the state of ostracism in which she had kept him? Her instinct had been right: the hail-fellow-well-met relations which he had established with every household in the Fellowship ought to have warned her that the only way to restrain the Western free-and-easiness from overstepping the line was to keep this irrepressible man outside her life altogether.

It was just because she had forgotten the personal equation in her anxiety about the reproduction of the great Taormina theatre, that she had gone with her father to meet him and take part in the discussion. And now he had thrown back their chances of an ordinary friendship or acquaintanceship almost indefinitely.

For a whole week she spent her entire days down at the Giant's Head, sketching with Jane, blissfully unconscious of where the sketches would go when they were completed. And when she did get home, in time for tea, she had it in her own room, to avoid all risks of a chance meeting with her *bête noire*.

But he was conscious that he had transgressed, and had resisted all Mr. Lorraine's attempts to bring him into the Abbot's Lodging when they returned from their labours.

When Grace learned this, from old Martha's scolding her for leaving her father day after day to have his tea alone, she began to fear that she had been too precipitate. After all, perhaps what he had intended to convey was no more than that he would have liked her to be his architect because she did not use technical language in the discussion, though she was sure that Mr. Sylvester, who knew a great deal more about it than she did, would talk to him in plain language.

Although it had terminated so tragically, the discussion had left her with a great respect for the shy, awkward Westerner, who had such a fund of drollery under his rugged exterior. He might mispronounce ludicrously ; he might show his ignorance at every turn. But she had never met a man—never even heard of a man—with such generous ideas. He was going to be a sort of universal benefactor in that poor and out-of-the-way part of Devon. There was something which appealed to her imagination in the very unfitness of his appearance, now. Since he was a droll, she had less objection to his tall, slim (which he would have called slab-sided) figure being appareled in a smart London calling suit while he stood on a wild sea-coast in one of the most uninhabited parts of South Devon, superintending the erection of a new Taormina. It seemed part of the character of a " Yankee at the Court of King Arthur."

And now that she had had time to go over things, there had been no evidence of any sort that any of this gigantic scheme was for his own glorification. The only occasion on which the question of advertisement had come in was when she had asked how he was going to make the horses drink after he had taken them to the water, and he had explained that he was going to do it by advertising. And then he was not talking of advertising himself, but of advertising the merits of his new health-resort system.

The feature which struck her most in the flood of plans to which she had listened was his earnestness in the whole matter. With him it was not a speculation or a hobby ; it was more like a social reformer's creed. It was an

Utopian ideal. And he had the wealth to put it to the test, and, it seemed also, the town-building experience to give the scheme a chance.

Yes, she was very interested in this wild and woolly enthusiast, if only he would leave his personal admiration for her out of the question, and think of her as a mind whose body had been eliminated from human sight by the wearing of an Arab necromancer's ring.

What was she doing? Why was she, Grace Lorraine, devising new schemes of amelioration with the man whose existence she had been trying to forget ever since he came to *Via Pacis*?

The fact was that unconsciously she had become his disciple. She had been attacked by the reforming microbe and her mind was in a fever. For one thing, it helped her to forget how deeply Roger had wounded her. It brought her back into the workaday world, where wounds are dealt and endured in silence, as she had endured hers, and are likewise recognized as part of the inscrutable plan of the All-wise.

Little by little she was persuaded that she had behaved unjustifiably, and to show her repentance for being hasty with that self-effacing millionaire, she hunted up a sketch which she had painted of the theatre of Taormina, which illustrated the point she had been making of the background for the stage, since behind the rosy columns you could see the vast snow-mantled shoulders of Mount Etna, and the long curves of colour which swept round its base—the grey-green of the cactus, the brown of the rocks, the yellow of the sand, and the blue of the Ionian Sea. It showed the combination of colour and form, of Art and Nature, which confers upon the theatre of Taormina its immortal beauty.

She determined to take it to him some morning at the place where he was working.

If Grace had maintained her total embargo of Mr. Ebbutt, he could have endured it better. But when she had seemingly triumphed over her aversion, and had shown an interest which amounted almost to an enthusiasm in his affairs, and all seemed fair sailing, it was

paralysing to be driven right back into the weeds of the Sargasso Sea.

If it had not been for Mr. Sylvester, Richmond Ebbutt would have lost all heart in the matter of that Graeco-Roman theatre, and allowed Horace Jones to work in variations like a fantasia on "Lohengrin." But Brooke Sylvester, to whom Grace habitually showed a better side of herself than she deigned to anyone else, though he did not or would not see that she would have accepted him as a husband if he had asked her, was so devoted to his beautiful disciple that he steeled Mr. Ebbutt against every deviation suggested by the architect. He even offered to persuade Grace to come back and help in the direction. But Mr. Ebbutt would not have her harassed to return, though he went there every day to see if she would repent and come.

He hoped against hope, until one day, a week and more later, as he stood on the spur of the hill which was to be built up into the open-air theatre, he was conscious of the figure of a woman coming across from the monastery. He had no need to look twice to know who it was—the elegance of her dress told him that; she had clothes enough to keep her smart for two years in the country when she moved out of the Manor House. She was alone, and evidently looking for him, for she had left the road and was coming straight across the meadow.

He advanced to meet her with a feeling of exultation in his heart to which it was not accustomed. She had forgiven him, then, for the unwelcomed and unintended advance which he had made that day? He would be very careful to-day.

"Good morning, Mr. Ebbutt," she said. "I came to bring you a sketch which I made at Taormina which bears out what I said about the view from the theatre. Will you look at it?"

He opened the parcel. Being a woman, she had secured the string with a bow instead of a knot; it only needed a pull to release it.

The work of the sketch was not good—as a draughts-woman she had improved since she painted this. But if

she was not a skilful artist, she could present the object which she was sketching, as he knew from the pictures of hers which he had bought from the Seacombe bookseller.

For a minute he had wild thoughts of confiding to her that he had bought them (even those which she had painted since their quarrel), but he had received a lesson for presumption so recently that he checked himself, and contented himself with giving her the thanks due to her courtesy, only adding that the sketch confirmed her arguments, which was the most adroit thing he could have said. She desired his recognition of her victory over Mr. Jones, though she would not tolerate it in any other direction.

"I will let you have it back quite safely when I have shown it to Mr. Jones," he said.

"Oh, no—pray don't trouble. You can keep it. I have made other sketches and still have them by me."

"Well, I can't thank you sufficiently"—he meant, "I dare not."

"You have thanked me in a very practical manner," she said. "You adopted my idea."

"How could I do otherwise? It was right." He stopped hastily, fearing that he might have said too much, but she was still thinking of her battle with Mr. Jones. And shortly afterwards, being in cold blood to-day, she went home.

Now it so happened that in one of her letters to Roger before the eventful day she had spoken derogatorily about Mr. Ebbutt, complaining that her father was always with him, and constantly bringing him to the house. "He grates on me," she said, "because he is so manifestly out of place."

Roger wrote back to her: "I wish you wouldn't speak of old Ebbutt like that. He's a good chap, and I think he has accommodated himself to the situation jolly well. I wish you could try and be decent to him."

The letter made her very wrathful. What right had Roger to talk to her about behaving decently? She was not using the word in its moral sense; she merely meant, what right had Roger to preach to her about

behaving handsomely if things were as black as they looked against him ?

But now, at last, she looked at the matter differently. She meant, in spite of what had happened, to fulfil her promise to Roger, and marry him if he could show her that he had acted up to his code. If his honour was safe, she would treat the deed as a trespass only.

If she married him she would have to obey him, so she might as well try to learn to obey him now. Indeed, she felt that a girl who was engaged to a man, and who would have been married to him if the war had not torn him from her, was virtually his wife already. She wrote to tell him that she would honestly try to obey him, and she examined herself diligently to repent her of her former rudeness.

CHAPTER XXXVI

THE OLIVE BRANCH

THE very next time that her father brought Mr. Ebbutt in to tea after working on the new hobby, Grace greeted him with distinctly more recognition. She asked him some interested questions, and suffered herself to remember how he liked his tea without asking him.

After tea she unbent more, and showed how well she understood him, for she said, "Would you like to come into my work-room, Mr. Ebbutt, and see my Taormina photographs?"

He kept a firm hand upon his cordiality, and said, "It would be of ver-ry great service to me, especially if you explained them to me. I have never been anywhere except Americky and England, you must know."

"Oh, yes, I'll explain them to you, certainly."

She had several portfolios of richly-stamped crimson leather, with her initials and her father's coat of arms on them (so incongruous in the present state of their fortunes), each containing about a hundred photographs, divided according to subject in parchment envelopes.

"My, what a lot of photographs you've got!"

"You have at least twenty times as many."

"Me?"

"Yes, you bought them with the house. I just took the ones that were my own, but I did not collect, like father."

He was just going to say, "I'll look them out and send them down to you," when he remembered, and returned

to the subject in hand, which was learning Taormina by photographs.

Seeing how intelligent he was, and how eager he was—treating everything she told him with the same respect as he received Mr. Jones's plans for building—she "let herself go," and dwelt enthusiastically on any detail in Taormina which had ravished her artist's soul, and was suggested by the photographs. He could hardly believe that it was the same woman who had mechanically smiled, mechanically made tea for him, and mechanically answered his questions, when her father brought him to the house.

As she warmed to her subject, he forgot his fears, not to the extent of trying to ingratiate himself, but only so far as allowing himself to appear in his natural light—quaint, humorous, uneducated, but so unaffected in his recognition of the fact that his ignorance was bliss to his audience; with a clear native intelligence, a capacity to take an interest in almost anything; and a beautiful humility which enabled him to forget his own colossal achievements, and envy those who had been able to give their lives to struggling in any artistic profession.

"I am a tradesman," he said. "I belong to the lowest order of profitable human beings. The agriculturist comes higher than I do because he has to establish an understanding with Nature before he can make the earth give her increase. You cannot work Nature with advertisements same as I worked the U-nited States and Canady."

"But you gave them a good thing in your 'common-sense china,' Mr. Ebbutt." They had been using it at the Fellowship of Via Pacis for the past two months.

"Yes, ma'am—you can't do big advertising without the thing'll stand it. That's an aximum, and in the long run aximums go further than maximums."

The photograph of the Badia Vecchia, proclaiming to the heavens from the steep hillside the beauty and the ruin of Sicily, with the most beautiful Gothic arches in the world, overwhelmed the rough Westerner with a rush of feeling.

"I'm going to have that summer-house in my Tarmeener if it costs me every red cent I have! Do you think that Jones could duplicate it for me, Miss Lorraine?"

"I don't know what Mr. Jones's capacity is, but no one in England would dream of entrusting a young architect with it—we should go to a man like Graham Jackson, who has proved his capacity to do it by building new Gothic monuments worthy to stand beside the old at Oxford."

"Mr. Jackson . . ."

"Sir Thomas."

"Sir Thomas Jackson—that's the idea. I'll get an estimate from him to do it."

"It will cost you thousands of pounds."

"Some of that will come off the account for the advertising. Think of the advertyzement with that picture reproduced in three colours as the Gothic Look-out of the Devonshire Tarmeener! I'm sorry as how Jones can't have the order—when he hears about it he'll be as mad as Nebuchadnezzar when he was told to keep off the grass. But it's better as you say, and anyhow, you've said it."

This was verging dangerously near the line of compliments, but she was absorbed in the thought of how glorious those arches would look to the voyagers on the great liners faring up and down the Channel, as they passed the mouth of the inlet, between its giant capes, if the tower was built of the same black and white as the immortal Badia Vecchia on the slopes of Monte Venere at Taormina.

"Tell me about it, Miss Lorraine," he said.

"There's nothing to tell you about it, except that it is five or six hundred years old, and is as much more beautiful than the photograph as the grandest palm-tree would be than its photograph. It has just the beauty of a palm in the curves of its arches. I think that its architect must have seen four palm-trees in a row forming arches, and immortalized their curves in marble."

The highly-coloured girlish simile threw Mr. Ebbutt into fresh raptures, which he managed to restrain.

Grace was thinking furiously. If her marriage was

not to be a splendid one, with a man whose companionship would be a delight to the very doors of the grave, and whose wealth would enable her to visit all the famous places which she desired, and live with ideal surroundings—to fulfil the destiny which she had set before herself ever since she was old enough to have lovers—was she not confronted with an alternative?

Mr. Ebbutt's ideas filled her with an interest in life greater than any which she had lost. Was there ever such a fascinating scheme as this?—to use wealth which set no limit to desires, for building an English Taormina in the most perfect scenery and climate of the South Devon coast! To be associated with it appealed to her more than anything else which she could conceive, and it was abundantly clear that the more she chose to interest herself and interfere in the carrying of it out, the better he would be pleased.

A woman's instinct told her that she could have Mr. Ebbutt for a husband, and share the ownership of all his vast wealth, if she chose to lift her little finger. But that was exactly what she could not persuade herself to do. She was born the most fastidious of a race in whom the fastidiousness bred of their fine pedigree, great possessions, and exquisite surroundings had become hereditary, and she had only to compare Mr. Ebbutt with her *fiancé* to realize how impossible it would be for her to share her home and her life with anything so crude as Mr. Ebbutt, abounding in noble instincts as he was. She could not have married Mr. Ebbutt even if she had not been engaged to the adorable Roger.

But as Fate compelled her to live in the same village in the wilderness as the man who was engaged on the great enterprise, there was no reason why she should not give herself the delight of taking part in it, and Mr. Ebbutt the delight of being constantly in her presence and her thoughts.

She went all through her Taormina photographs with him conscientiously, and when he had reluctantly arrived at the last one, said, "Are there any questions you want to ask me about Taormina itself?"

"Hundreds—I should say thousands. Only I can't think of many of them all at once."

"Oh, you dear simple man!" she said. "Come to me whenever you think of one that concerns the building of your town. I am really very interested in it, and I will help you as much as I can."

He could not believe his ears, and losing all sense of prudence, poured forth his protestations of gratitude.

As she was really burning to collaborate with him, she did not check him, but led the way back to her father in the library.

"I know most points that are likely to turn up about the Devonshire Tarmeen, Mr. Lorraine, I guess. Your daughter seems to know it inside-out."

Mr. Lorraine looked at his daughter; he saw that an *entente cordiale* between her and his friend had been arranged, and was thankful.

CHAPTER XXXVII

HOW ROGER WAS GIVEN A WEEK-END'S LEAVE FOR HIS MARRIAGE

AS the spring advanced, welcome reinforcements reached the British in the trenches of Flanders, where Roger was stationed. From having to be ready for the enemy day and night, with no relief except what they could give themselves by dividing themselves into watches, they grew strong enough to make the small surprise attacks by night on the enemy's trenches, in which the British soldier almost as much as his Colonial cousin delights, and no one in his regiment delighted in them more than Roger, who loved an adventure, and had no sense of danger.

Bombing gave him special pleasure, for his cricketer's eye made him very expert in throwing bombs; more than once he had caught the enemy's bombs and thrown them back before they had time to explode.

So often did he come back safe from these expeditions, which generally brought a tale of casualties, though they might punish the enemy twenty or a hundredfold, that the men thought that he bore a charmed life, and were ready to follow him to the end of the world.

But they would have to do without him for five days, because the Colonel had given him a week-end's leave to get married, in recognition of his gallantry. The Colonel remembered that Roger was engaged to the lovely girl to whom he had been introduced at their departure from Waterloo.

Roger dashed off a letter in the wildest spirits :

“ MY OWN GRACE,

“ I am writing to give you the best news in the world. The Colonel is so pleased with me that he has given me a week-end of five days to come to ‘ Blighty ’ and get married! So we did not lose so very many months by my putting off getting that license.

“ Isn’t it ripping? We won’t make any misfire this time. I’ve got the license still, so we’ll get married the very day I come home. I’ll make my grand-guv’nor turn out, if it’s the middle of the night. As the posts take so long from over here, I daresay you’ll get me before you get my letter. Nothing can prevent us pulling it off this time, as I’m not going into the trenches again till I come home.”

(The rest of the letter was taken up with bombing stories.)

“ With millions of love,

“ Always your affectionate

“ ROGER.”

Grace had a sheaf of misgivings to burden her delight in getting the letter.

On the one hand, she was now truly in love with Roger, and her heart felt great throbs of emotion as she read of the incredible dangers which he seemed to plunge-into with such zest—which ought to have been rewarded with a V.C., instead of marriage with a girl who was half inclined to draw back on the threshold. And on the other hand, she meant to know if he had acted up to his code about Hestia before she would allow herself to marry him.

If Roger could forgive himself, she could forgive him. She was sure that Roger would never have fallen if he had not been the victim of some such circumstances as she had imagined. But it was not only a question of how he felt—*humanum est errare*—but of how he felt sufficiently freed from his guilt afterwards to be able to let his marriage with her go through. It was easier for her to forgive a man, with his happy-go-lucky nature, for getting into trouble, than to forgive his getting out again by not being sufficiently careful not to add to the other person’s misfortune.

That Roger could have done such a thing she did not believe, but she must have his own word for it.

There would be another terrible moment for her when she had to let him know that Hestia had been betrayed to her already, and that therefore he would not be guilty of treason to Hestia in explaining his conduct. Satisfy her he must, or it would be the end of all things between them.

What she feared most was not that he would have acted unforgivably, but that he would refuse to discuss a matter of such delicacy in which Hestia was involved, for if he would not speak she could not save him.

The letter did reach her before he did, and Mr. Ebbutt's car conveyed her and his mother to meet each of the two trains a day from London which stopped at Seacombe Road.

For three days they did this, but when the second train on the third day came and went with no Roger, making the fifth day from the posting of his letter, they sorrowfully gave up meeting the train until they had word of him.

The easiest excuse which they could frame for themselves was that the Germans had made one of their great attacks, stopping all leave—and also stopping all letters, lest secrets valuable to the enemy should leak out.

Mr. Ebbutt motored into Plymouth, and heard from Mr. Skewen, who was his lawyer as well as Mr. Lorraine's, that wounded men were coming into the town from a heavy action in the part of France where they knew Roger to be, because an East Surrey officer, wounded in an earlier action, had smuggled an uncensored letter to Grace.

CHAPTER XXXVIII

HOW FRIENDSHIP BEGAN BETWEEN GRACE LORRAINE AND MR. EBBUTT

A YEAR and more had passed since Roger had been reported missing, and entirely disappeared.

Though it was still spring by the calendar, it was summer at Via Pacis, where the daffodils were blooming in armies like the asphodels at Taormina.

One long street following the curve of the coast had risen from the apple orchard of Via Pacis, and as the trees had been spared wherever it was possible, they had bathed it in blossom as the almonds bathe the slopes of Taormina. It was the front street, roughly reproducing the main street of Taormina.

The theatre was there, too, and the old clock-tower in the centre, and two little churches, hardly bigger than private chapels. The materials for these were at hand. There was an island in the inlet, belonging to the estate which was covered with unsightly stone heaps, on which nothing seemed to grow but stinging-nettles. It had been a castle guarding the harbour, until the Lorraine of the day tried to hold it against Oliver Cromwell, who had first battered it and then blown it to pieces. The old grey stones lay there undisturbed, because the farmers and villagers could not steal them from the island unobserved, and the Lorraines cherished the ruins as a milestone in the history of their family.

But Mr. Jones assured Mr. Ebbutt that the value of the memorial would be enhanced by removing all the loose stones, and exposing what remained standing of the shell of the walls and towers.

When the stones were removed to the scene of the building operations, the range of five underground vaults cut out of the rock, which, filled with stores and ammunition, had enabled the garrison to hold out for the King so long, were discovered to be practically uninjured. Mr. Ebbutt drew the attention of the Admiral at Plymouth to their value, and they were taken over for the Navy, who were already using the inlet as a station for armed trawlers and mine-sweepers.

The castle had possessed a chapel and a banqueting-hall, for the abbots had lived in it during the Wars of the Roses, and the Lorraines until the Manor House was built, and the fragments of Gothic windows in the ruins gave a fine appearance of antiquity to the two little churches, which were to be for hire to religious denominations under very strict conditions as to decoration. The Church of England people were already well provided for in Mr. Wynyard's fine and ancient church in the village, erected by a fifteenth-century Bishop of Exeter in rivalry to the monastery.

The dark red sandstone for copying the ruin of the Taormina theatre came from a Plymouth stoneyard, where it had been lying idle since the beginning of the war, because the building of a church had been countermanded. There were even round stones for the columns, which were to have supported the arches of the nave.

The copying of the Orologio Tower at Taormina, and the two little churches of Sant' Agostino and Sant' Antonio, which Grace persuaded Mr. Ebbutt to call by their Italian names (he did not greatly care if it prevented the denominations from hiring such suitable buildings), gave Grace intense pleasure, especially Sant' Agostino, which was built facing the tower on a little piazza, as it stands at Taormina. The piazza was given its tiny esplanade, with a thin rail facing the sea, and its copy of the poor little Taormina club to be used as a tea-room.

Let not the reader think these trivial details unimportant to the story. They might have been, it is true, had not Grace's heart been in them.

Horace Jones, the architect, was almost paralysed

by the amount of money which Mr. Ebbutt was prepared to spend on the Devonshire Taormina. How was he to know that the American had received more value out of the plans which he had prepared for him than out of the most successful speculations of his life?

Richmond Ebbutt could never sufficiently thank him. It was the Taormina scheme which had melted the hardness of Grace's heart. Already, in the absence of Roger, Mr. Ebbutt was her closest friend. Every morning when she awoke she planned out what she would do with him for a new development of the idea. She had no house-keeping to do, because their meals were sent in from the kitchen of the Fellowship, and the housework was done by the staff, except for a few things which their old servant preferred to do herself.

So the hours which she used to divide between her painting and moping were now given to working with Mr. Ebbutt, and Mr. Jones—when he was there, which was not always, now, though new houses were called for every now and then.

The roads had already been made, and drains and water laid down in them for connecting up with the houses when they were built.

Grace was constantly at the Manor House now. Having seen how absolutely she could trust Mr. Ebbutt not to presume, she did not give the matter another thought, but ran in whenever a new idea struck her, to discuss it with him. And having discovered, like his working people at Ebbuttsville, Ohio, how generous, how unselfish, how upright, how charitable to other people's failings he was, and having, in addition to that, discovered, on her own account, how enthusiastic he was about beautiful and ancient things, and what a capacity for good taste he had when the charm was pointed out to him, she had made him her companion as she used to make Roger, only Mr. Ebbutt was a companion for her mind instead of for sport.

The only sport she had nowadays was golf with Gaston Bernafay, to whom she could "give a half" and win. But he made a point of being ready to play when she wanted

him, and while they were being ferried over to the links, or at tea afterwards, she could discuss with him Mr. Ebbutt's schemes for the *Via Pacis* plays. A romantic actor, like Mr. Bernafay, who was very perfect in his technique, and had received a thorough training in every branch of the profession, especially in the matter of stock companies—for he had been long at the Brighton Theatre in its palmy days—was exactly the right person to manage Mr. Ebbutt's King-Arthur-Oberammergau scheme. And Mr. Ebbutt engaged him to superintend it, with a liberal salary, and a house in the New Taormina, and gave him practically *carte-blanche* for the expenses of the production—another excursion into the Middle Ages.

One episode in especial had illustrated several of the American's fine qualities to her. Rachel, who was now his housekeeper, as she had been theirs, in one of her numerous visits to the Manor House, told her about the room above the porch which was filled with the pictures from her brush which Mr. Ebbutt had bought from the local bookseller.

"I can't take you into it," she said, "because ever since the pictures were there he has given strict orders that no one should go into the room but myself. But I think that I could make him invite you into the room himself. Shall I try?"

"Yes, do," said Grace. It would give her a thrill to see it, now that she and he were such friends.

Rachel was not slow in finding an opportunity. The next time that Grace was coming to tea, she suggested having it in that room.

"Why do you suggest this?" he asked.

"Well, for one thing, it is the nicest room in the house for a small tea, and for another thing, she's ripe to see the pictures now, and be pleased, not angry."

"Do you think so, Rachel?" he asked eagerly.

"I am sure of it."

"Then give us tea there."

All the same, he led the way to it with great diffidence when tea was announced, and waited like a schoolboy in the presence of a head master to hear her verdict.

"Oh, Maecenas, how good of you!" she said. She called him Maecenas because he was the patron of all that was artistic at Via Pacis—a veritable Maecenas. "And you've given them my favourite frames, too. But how did you get hold of them, may I ask?"

"I bought them from Mr. Trezennor, the bookseller at Seacombe. I bought a big batch of them at first, and afterwards as they came in. Having found a purchaser for them, he gave you an order, I suppose, to let him have as many as you could?"

"Yes, he did."

A sudden thought seemed to strike him, which made his face cloud.

"I'm going to ask you a question, Miss Grace, which may be a strain to our friendship."

"It would take a good deal to do that now, Maecenas."

"Well, I hope so. But don't blame me for asking it. How much did he give you for those pictures?"

"Oh, I don't mind telling you. Before one who is so sincere as you, I shan't blush in confessing the low value which I have in the Art World. He gave me ten shillings each for them."

"For the big lot which he bought at first?"

"Yes, and all the others as well."

"The low-down dog!" he said. "I don't say it about the first lot—that was a pure spec. He didn't know as whether he would find a market for them or not, though I have a shrewd idea, seeing the kind of man that he has shown himself, that he meant to work on people's pity for your misfortunes, not allowing that he had bought them for a rise himself, but pretending that the money for each one was only going to you, if he sold it, and that he was getting nothing out of them."

"But when he knew as how I would buy every one that he brought to me for two guineas—that was the price he put on them—he should have handed over the two guineas to you, taking off the fifteen or twenty per cent. which is usual in the trade. I think that ten would have been enough in your case, seeing what he owes to your family. But to go on making seventy-five per cent. out

of a dead cert., knowing how you wanted the money—it's monstrous ! I shall let him know my mind ! ”

“ Oh, don’t, or he won’t give me any more orders.”

“ I shall buy from you direct in the future, at the price he has fixed, or . . . ”

“ I know what you’re going to say, Maecenas, but don’t you dare to say it, or you will shame me out of painting ! I will sell them to you direct, but I don’t think that I shall let you give me more than ten shillings each for them—they’re not worth it.”

“ But . . . ”

“ But me no buts, but tell me why you desire to possess such wretched productions ? ”

“ Shall I really tell you ? ”

She knew quite well the sort of thing which he would say, but she had the whim to hear it just this once.

“ You will promise not to let it make any difference to our friendship ? ”

“ Yes, I promise.”

“ Honest injun ? ”

“ Yes, honest injun.”

“ Oh, well, if you must have it, I bought them because I don’t like any other human being to possess anything which has been yours.”

“ You could have had any number of things which had been mine, or which I had used, if you had only been of this mind when you came into possession of the house,” she said, with a little laugh to hide her feelings, which only made the laugh itself full of feeling.

“ I have got every one of them, I hope, because the things which were about the house in the private rooms are all there still. I brought no things of my own, and I loved your house as I saw it, so I left things just as they were. But the things which were in the rooms you occupied yourself, which you left behind to throw away—I gave Rachel orders that not one of them should leave the rooms, that they should all be laid away in your drawers or your cupboards, as if they were waiting for your return.”

Grace had never felt so touched in her life. It was a devotion—nay, rather, a worship beyond her conception.

“Oh, you dear, kind, faithful Maecenas! I am not worthy of such devotion! Until I began working with you, I was comparatively a rotter, though I have tried to be decent about Roger.”

“You mean in refusing to believe that he is dead, and keeping yourself for him?”

“No, I’m afraid I don’t mean that at all, but I can’t tell you what I do mean.”

“Well, I have no right to know. And I shall always be grateful that you let me tell you my secret without its injuring our friendship.”

“Indeed, I don’t mind telling you that I’m very fond of you, Maecenas. There’s no reason why you should not know. Since you are aware that I am engaged to Roger Wynyard, it can’t raise false hopes in your breast. And we are very big, big friends.”

* * * * *

When Grace left the Manor House, Mr. Ebbutt sent for his car, and motored down to Trezennor’s shop. When he entered it, the bookseller was fulsomely polite.

“Oh, good evening, Mr. Ebbutt.”

“Good evening,” said the millionaire, rather curtly. “I came to see you about those pictures you bought from Miss Lorraine. I find that you only paid her ten shillings apiece for them, when you knew that you could get two guineas apiece for them from me.”

“I introduced her pictures to you, sir. When I bought that first lot I did it more to help her than anything else—there was nothing to show me how they would go, and they were nothing very great as works of art. I put my price on them, and you paid it. I am unable to see that I have done anything for her to complain of.”

“Perhaps not. We’ll pass that first lot. But when you asked her to bring you some more, you did it with the full knowledge that you were going to ask me two guineas apiece for them, and that I should pay it.”

“I don’t deny it, sir.”

"Then here I think she has a good deal to complain of—especially since she needs money, and her father has been such a liberal patron of your shop until he had his loss. You should have told her that you could get her a commission to paint a number more pictures, for which the purchaser was willing to pay two guineas each, and explained the commission which the trade are accustomed to charge an artist upon orders which they procure for him or her!"

"I don't see it, sir. I've a right to buy in the cheapest market and sell in the dearest—that is the principle of Free Trade, and England is the land of Free Trade."

"There is not much to boast of in that. There would have been no war without England's Free Trade. It gave Germany the money to arm herself with. Don't talk to me of Free Trade. America don't have Free Trade and she's a deal more prosperous than England. But I'm getting off the point, which is that I don't like the way you've treated Miss Lorraine."

"You must leave me to manage my own business, Mr. Ebbutt," said the bookseller, his Cornish irascibility getting the better of his desire to humour so good a customer.

"Before I leave you to manage your own business, Mr. Trezennor, I have a business proposition to lay before you. You will allow that I must know the principles of business, since I began without a cent, and, except Mr. Astor—Lord Astor, I think he is now—am probably the richest man in England?"

"Yes, sir," said the bookseller, a little cooled down by the mention of so much wealth.

"Well, the business proposition which I wish to lay before you is that for those thirty or forty pictures of Miss Lorraine's which you bought after the first lot, you should pay her another twenty-four shillings each, representing the price I paid you, less about twenty per cent. commission—or I should be satisfied, since the transaction is closed, if you paid her another pound on each picture, representing a twelve-shilling commission for you—a good deal over five-and-twenty per cent."

The Cornishman blazed out: "I'm not going to be dictated to in my business by you or anyone else—millionaire or not! I can tell you that, Mr. Ebbutt!"

"Quite so, Mr. Trezennor," said the millionaire blandly. "I will leave you to manage your own business more completely than you think. I understand from my agent that you are in treaty for the big corner store in the shopping street of my new town. You will not be allowed to have this shop, or any other shop in my town, and I shall let that corner-shop to Railway Bookstalls Ltd.—or, if they are not willing to take it, I shall engage men who have been with them, and run a bookshop myself, which shall equal the best shop they have. Good evening, Mr. Trezennor."

Mr. Ebbutt had left the shop before Mr. Trezennor had time to recover himself. When at last he found speech, he said to his wife, "Well, I'm dommed! Bringing they bookstalls down here! But I'll fight 'un, and the folk tu Old Seacombe itself won't leave me. What Old Seacombe wanted was all my fayther had afore Squire started his new-fangled business tu Via Pacis. Not that I ha' not done well out of it. But I'll see him dommed, I will!"

"Trezennor," said his wife, who was a Devon woman, "'tis a pity you could not be just. What new Squire said about Miss Grace was just. I doubt it he's a just man, and if it wasn't just it was business, and you ought to have seed it. A Cornishman never sees that he is doin' wrong, and it's often that he's not doin' right, for he can't shut his eye to the temptation of taking what isn't his own if there's nobody lookin'. New Squire saw, though he wasn't for looking, and you thought to save the wrong by temper. It's a bad business, it is, it is."

"I'll not be dictated to by any man!" he cried doggedly.

"Maybe not—he can't make a just man of you, Sile, but he can make a poor one!"

"He can't make anything of me!" he shouted.

"The Lord knows us," she said. "When he means to ruin a man, he makes him a fool first."

CHAPTER XXXIX

OF THE PRESSURE BROUGHT UPON GRACE TO MARRY
MR. EBBUTT

RAILWAY BOOKSTALLS LTD. were perfectly willing to oblige the millionaire, who wanted them to establish a shop in his new town. If he would guarantee them a certain turnover for five years, they were ready to take the premises from him at the very moderate rental put on them, and to establish a shop of the class he required, and a stall in the market-place by the harbour, where the motor-bus from Seacombe Road stopped on its way to Via Pacis.

Mr. Ebbutt had helped the 'bus proprietor, who ran the nine miles between the station and the town, to substitute a motor service—the hills were so severe on the horses, and he was an ardent member of the R.S.P.C.A.—and the time wasted was so serious a hindrance to his schemes for the advancement of Via Pacis.

As far as immediate results went, the millionaire felt them before the bookseller. For his bill was only made up at the end of the quarter, while Grace had been accustomed to get ten shillings or a pound a week by the sketches she took in to Mr. Trezennor, and the Squire knew that the Cornishman was no longer buying them, because they were no longer being offered to him. So the net result of his interference was to deprive Grace of these useful relays of pocket-money. When he had tried to

persuade her to let him buy them direct from her, she had not refused him in so many words, but she had alleged that she was so busy helping him with his building that she had no time for sketching.

"Well, you do your sketches and leave me to do my own work." It was a most heroic offer; it meant giving up one of his greatest pleasures in life, and letting his work suffer at the same time, for the want of advice from someone who knew the real Taormina well.

She shook her head. "No, I can't let the work suffer."

"Well—may I make another risky suggestion, under a safe conduct from you that you won't let our friendship suffer for it?"

"Well, yes," she said. "But don't try me too far," she added, having an inkling of what might be coming.

"I was going to say, may I offer you a salaried post, as my adviser when Mr. Jones is away, with just the money attached to it that you lose by not doing your painting?"

"I knew that you were going to say that, but of course I cannot permit it. And I don't really want any money at Via Pacis. I have nothing to spend it on. Our board and lodging is found, and I have enough clothes left to last me for years."

He bit his lip with remorse. He had done her this injury not only in the hope of benefiting her, but to gratify his own sense of justice, and now he was in a cleft stick, where he, with his millions of money, could not get one shilling of it to the straitened pockets of the woman whom he loved better than all his wealth.

* * * * * *

But Grace had said truthfully that she was not in need of the money, for she had been putting all she made by her pictures into the Savings Bank.

* * * * * *

Though Grace would not take his commissions for her pictures, it was impossible not to be affected by his generous

championing of her interests, and she allowed him to give her a library subscription of the most expensive kind at the R.B., because he said that he would have to spend lavishly there to bring the guarantee up to the proper figure until more people came to live at the New Taormina. To a voracious reader like her, this was a source of never-ending pleasure.

Nor—for the same reasons—did she refuse the commission to paint pictures of Via Pacis at two guineas each, less the usual commission, which the R.B. forwarded to her, realizing further that if she did so she would only be playing into the hands of Trezennor in his fight with Mr. Ebbutt. But she was so determined that the pictures should be more worthy that she took an unconscionable time over them.

Mr. Trezennor felt the pressure, though he might not notice the withdrawal of his principal account till quarter-day came, and he was paying out himself.

His newspaper trade was the first to suffer, for the big firm got their papers down earlier, more regularly, and on a far more liberal scale, since returns were a simple affair for them. Even a fishing place like Seacombe is faddy about its *Daily Mirror* and *Daily Sketch*, and likes to get them direct from London by the down train which stops at Seacombe Road, instead of getting them from Plymouth by the up-train, because they left London by the later train, which does not stop at Seacombe Road.

Trezennor's shop, too, was away from the centre of the traffic, while the R.B. had their stall where the motor-bus stopped in the old town, near the harbour-head.

Preparations for the coming summer season were now the order of the day. Mr. Ebbutt wished to provide an ideal holiday for professional people of straitened means, who took advantage of the economies which he offered them.

He also invited the Professional Classes' War Relief Committee in Prince's Gate to send him down as his guests every week, for a seven days' rest, fifty professional people who could not afford a holiday; he sent the money for their railway fares, and used a large boarding-house,

on the Italian plan, which had not yet been occupied, for their accommodation.

The weeks before the summer holidays were passed in hard work at practical preparations.

* * * * *

A full year had now passed since Roger had last been heard of, and both his mother and Grace were abandoning their hopes of his survival. His mother had lost all hope in her heart, though she continued to say that she would do such and such a thing when Roger came home. But Grace, though she had ceased to talk about it, always had the feeling in her heart that the impossible would happen.

Correspondingly in Mr. Ebbutt's breast little seeds of hope began to burgeon. He confided to Mr. Lorraine, under the strictest pledge of secrecy, that he cherished the ambition—if Roger did not come back—of inducing Grace to give him the right to restore to her the home and heritage of her ancestors.

And he gained a sympathetic ear, for if Grace had to marry (and such a beautiful and healthy girl could not be expected to remain single all her life, waiting for a lover who would never return) he had several reasons for preferring Mr. Ebbutt to any other son-in-law.

Grace, in the first place, would once more reign as the mistress of the Manor House, beyond the reach of misfortunes such as had overtaken himself and his father-in-law, and in the second place, in Mr. Ebbutt he would have a son-in-law who was already continuing his noble foundation of the Fellowship of *Via Pacis*.

Of Grace's future happiness with such a husband he had not the slightest doubt, for if in birth and physique and education he was far from the ideal which her fastidious fancy would look for in a husband, his excessive generosity and unselfishness, and his cheeriness and romantic enthusiasm, must surround her with an atmosphere of the deepest content. A duke's daughter would think twice before she rejected such enormous wealth.

“ Shall I speak to her about it ? ”

"No, it might look like pressure."

For once in his life Mr. Lorraine felt recalcitrant. He was mindful that though Mr. Ebbutt did not wish him to speak about it to Grace, he had not expressed any wish that he should keep silence in other directions.

He might, at all events, consult Lady Cynthia, the other person principally concerned. But how should he set about it? It would be cruel even to sound her as to whether she had given up all hope or not. He must get her to volunteer that information. But how should he do it? He could think of no better way than bluntly informing her of the fact.

So he called on her, and blurted out, "Ebbutt wants to marry Grace."

She looked at him curiously. The announcement she had foreseen for some time. Had not he also foreseen it? He was a blind old thing, to be sure, or he would not be in the position to which he had fallen. But could he be so blind as this? The shadow of it had been troubling her for six months past.

"Well," she said, after a little, "why shouldn't he? If Grace were still a great heiress she might think of it twice. But as it is, you ought both to be thankful. You'll excuse my bluntness, Uncle Henry. But, I take it, you want real advice?"

"Most decidedly."

"Then there can be no two words about it. He's a decent fellow, if ever there was one."

"As far as the money's concerned, I'd say yes if he'd only a thousand a year instead of a hundred thousand. That isn't the point, Cynthia."

"Doesn't she want to marry him?"

"I'm afraid not—but that isn't the point either."

Lady Cynthia sighed. "I see what you mean, dear friend, I think, and thank you a thousand times. But that, at any rate, should not stand in the way any longer. In fact, just to hedge, I should even welcome it, because nothing would be so likely to bring him back as Grace's giving him up. I don't know what my father-in-law would call these coincidences—most clergymen would class them

under 'inscrutable ways,' but my pagan view of them is that Fate enjoys cheating expectations."

"I don't like your talking like that, Cynthia."

"Well, put it as you like—I would throw even the marriage with Grace into the melting-pot, though it has been the chief wish of his life, to know that he is still upon the earth."

"Do you mean that you would not grudge her marrying Mr. Ebbutt?"

"I think she ought to marry him. I even think that she'd be happier with him than with Roger in the long run."

"I think I do. Grace has developed in this past year."

"Then give your consent."

"It isn't a question of my consent, Cynthia, but of hers. He daren't ask her himself for fear of wrecking their friendship, and he won't let me speak for him."

"Grace can be very difficult."

"I know. What should one do?"

"I think, perhaps, I'd better approach her. I can introduce the subject of Roger, and pass to Mr. Ebbutt incidentally, if I don't see my way to doing it directly."

"It's most good of you, Cynthia—the person with the best right to raise an objection."

"It would be unjust to both her and you if I did raise it. Roger would be the first to say so himself."

"Poor Roger!"

"You mustn't say 'poor Roger'—you mustn't even say 'poor us' if he has died for his country. The Prime Minister himself has given his first-born to head the glorious list."

"Then you will speak to her?"

"Yes, I'll speak to her."

The next day, when Grace came down to ask the question which seemed for ever doomed to disappointment, Lady Cynthia said to her, "Grace dear, your father has asked me to speak to you upon a matter which lies very near his heart."

"What is it? Why didn't he ask me himself?" said Grace, suspiciously.

"Because he had promised not to."

"Promised whom?"

"The person most concerned. That should tell you what I have to say to you."

"It tells me only too plainly. But how can you, above all people, urge it?"

"Because only I can urge it without doing Cynthia Wynyard an injury."

"And why do you do it?"

"Because it is for your benefit and happiness."

"It is not for my happiness. A voice within me tells me that Roger is not dead. And I have to wait for him."

"In the face of what you say, I cannot without disloyalty to Roger fulfil my promise to your father," said Lady Cynthia.

It was an impotent conclusion to the brave words which she had spoken to Mr. Lorraine. But her artillery had been captured, and she could only draw off.

"Dad, dear," Grace said, finding her father alone on her return, "why did you go to Aunt Cynthia about my engagement to Roger?"

"I am not going to prevaricate, Grace. I hold it a sin for any father to prevaricate to a child. I think the time has come for you to give up hoping for his return."

"Why shouldn't I feed on hope?"

"Because it must be in vain now. His mother herself has ceased to cherish it."

"I shall hope against hope."

"But why?" persisted her father, in a way to which she was not accustomed from him—he was always so gentle and self-effacing. She did not understand it.

"Why do you urge me so, father?"

"Cannot you see? By my fatuity in business I allowed the lands which my ancestors have held for nearly four hundred years, and the splendid prospects which you had inherited, to be torn from you. Now Providence has been pleased to vouchsafe the means of winning them back, with only one single drawback attaching—your engagement to a dear boy who has been dead a year."

"I don't believe that he is dead, father."

" I wish I didn't—I wish his mother didn't. But we are both agreed that it is only waiting for a shadow when a reality is offering itself."

" You mean that Mr. Ebbutt wants to marry me ? "

" Yes. Have you such an insuperable objection to him ? "

" I have no objection to Mr. Ebbutt. After Roger, and Mr. Sylvester, I like him better than anybody I know. He is a man among men. I can understand his making such an almost inconceivable fortune. He has such a power of imagination, and listens to its dictates. But I cannot think of him as I think of Roger, my chosen companion since childhood. In fact, I cannot think of him as a husband at all. I can only picture him as a father, like you—ineffably kind, always about looking after me, and waiting on my comfort and wishes, always giving everything and taking nothing, something to submit to with affection, not to engage in the battle of love."

" He would not ask more until you wished to give more. You could go on as you are going now. As it is, you spend most of the day in his society. You are the *confidante* of all his plans, you share all the work he does on the estate ; your whole day is taken up in doing things with him, or thinking out what you are going to do with him. Except in the matter of giving him the privileges of a husband, which he would not press, and living in the Manor House again instead of in the Abbot's Lodging, you would be doing exactly the same as you do now."

" If I married him at all, Dad, I should withhold nothing. I should go to him as frankly as I should go to Roger. I am not the sort of woman to do things by halves. But I will not make a pinchbeck marriage. I have always determined that my marriage should be the greatest thing in my life. You know that this was the reason why I would not listen to you when Roger was so constantly begging me to marry him, and you were so anxious that I should grant his request. I knew that Roger, unless he developed, for which I was willing to give him time, could not give me the companionship of interests I needed in one to whom I was to give up my life. So I refused him

until he was going to face the enemy, and, since I loved him, and I should not have been able to forgive myself if what has happened had happened without my making the *amende*, I was prepared to marry him there and then. You know why the marriage failed."

"Because dear Roger, in his happy-go-lucky way, wasted a day over getting the license."

"We will leave it at that, as Roger would say."

The whole episode of Roger's last few days before his departure for the front bordered on the inexplicable to Mr. Lorraine.

After parting with Roger so briefly on the Friday night, more determined than ever not to promise to marry him if he came back safe when the war was over, with something so near a quarrel between them that she had not accompanied them to the station in Mr. Ebbutt's car, she had written to him on the Sunday as soon as she had heard that his sailing was postponed, to ask him to a meeting at which she meant to say that she would marry him before he left. And he had felt so little eagerness that he had trifled away a whole day before he went to get the license, though surely his Commanding Officer, if he had laid the facts before him, would have given him instant leave to settle a matter so urgent? Then he and Grace had passed the day while the license was maturing with the proper absorption of lovers, and the intention of being married as soon as the twenty-four hours were up. And then once more the hour of departure had been changed at an instant's notice, and the marriage frustrated.

What was he to think of it? And what was he to think of the new *impasse*?

"Well, if I say no more about it unless we get positive proof of Roger's death, will you promise to marry Mr. Ebbutt if the proofs are forthcoming?"

"No, Dad, I'm afraid I can't. If I can't marry the man I wish, I won't marry at all. I would not accept Roger in the old days because he could only give me love, and I cannot marry Mr. Ebbutt because I could not love him as a husband. He can remain my greatest friend. He can have as much of my companionship as he chooses all the

time that he and we live at Via Pacis, and I could give him very little more if we were married."

"But surely you see the difference it would make if you were married, and once more the mistress of Via Pacis, and mother of its heirs? The effect of my folly would be wiped out, and my anxiety for your future would be at an end."

"There is no anxiety for my future, Dad. For, as you've so often told me, the foundation deed of the Fellowship of Via Pacis lays down that the nomination of the Fellows shall be vested in your heir for the time being, and if I survive you I shall be your heir, and can nominate myself to the first vacancy."

"Ah, but that isn't the same thing, Grace, and now that poor Roger's gone, and there is no obstacle to your marriage, it is your duty to marry Ebbutt and restore the fortunes of the Lorraines."

"They won't be Lorraines any longer; they will be American Ebbutts."

Mr. Lorraine's face fell; he had not thought of this, obvious as it was. But he recovered himself and said, "The main thing is the inheritance. I should die happy if I could reflect that my daughter was back in the home of her ancestors."

"Tell Mr. Ebbutt," she said, desiring to spare the feelings of the man for whom she felt such a real affection of another kind, "that I have not given up hope of Roger, and shall not for many a day yet."

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CHAPTER XL

HOW NEWS OF ROGER'S DEATH WAS BROUGHT TO GRACE, AND SHE CONSENTED TO MARRY MR. EBBUTT

A SANATORIUM for convalescent officers who were too poor to afford a sanatorium where they had to pay for themselves, and needed a genial climate to expedite their recovery, was part of Mr. Ebbutt's New Taormina scheme.

A sanatorium for convalescent soldiers had been his first idea, but he had been assured by those who knew Tommy best that the plan was unsuitable, because Tommy would prefer to spend his convalescence in a suburb of London where he would see more life. Attracted by the name, since he was called after the American city of that name, Richmond Ebbutt hired the large empty houses on the hill overlooking the river at Richmond, and turned them into sanatoria for the rank and file.

He had intended to make the convalescent rank and file his especial care, if he could have had them down at Via Pacis. At Richmond he could do no more than pay them regular visits to see if things were being done on the scale that he wished.

The officers at Via Pacis were allowed to bring their wives to look after them, and were housed in the reproductions of the Palazzo Corvaia and the Santa Caterina Convent.

Thither in the early summer of 1916 came Captain and Mrs. Dicey.

As a man of the people himself, Mr. Ebbut was much

interested when he heard that Captain Dicey was a ranker. He called on him at once.

He found a cheery man, the life and soul of the sanatorium, who took a great interest in getting up entertainments. This brought him into touch with Gaston Bernafay, and the acting and musical contingent of the Via Pacis Fellowship, and with Lady Cynthia, who, as widow of an officer on the Viceroy of India's staff, had considerable experience in getting up amateur dramatic performances and concerts.

Mr. Ebbutt had asked her to become patroness of the sanatorium. She accepted joyfully, and worked as hard as any paid official in the place. Whatever she did for them she seemed to be doing, not for the Lord, but for her lost son. Of all the new interests in life which Mr. Ebbutt's scheme had brought to the Wynyards, so long isolated in the wilds, there was none comparable to this.

The first time that Captain Dicey met her, he said to her, "Did you say that your name was Wynyard?"

"Yes."

"How curious! We had an officer of your name in my Battalion."

"What was your Battalion, Captain Dicey?"

"The 20th Battalion, East Surrey Regiment."

"He was my son."

"I was with him when he fell, Lady Cynthia."

"And you saw him die?"

"I saw him dead."

"Don't tell me about it now. I could not hear it in the middle of a rehearsal, but bring your wife to dinner on the first night that will suit her, so that his grandfather and I may hear the truth which we have so long feared. He was only reported missing in the *Gazette*, you know."

On the next night, when the Diceys had gone to dinner at the Rectory, Captain Dicey said to Lady Cynthia in the drawing-room after dinner:

"Yes, I remember the circumstances of the case perfectly. When we finally took the position where he and so many of our chaps had fallen, they could not find his body."

“ Are you quite sure that he was killed, Captain Dicey ? ”

“ Quite sure. I was badly wounded myself, and lay on the ground close to him for several hours, shamming dead, because the German snipers were shooting every man that stirred and showed he had a spark of life in him. I lay there till dark, and then I got up and ran to our own lines. I was not much hurt ; I did not get back with the rest when they retired, for I had been knocked insensible.

“ It was lucky that I ran, for the boys were just retiring on their reserves, though afterwards they were reinforced, and went forward again and took the position from the flank.”

“ Couldn’t he have been shamming dead, too ? ”

“ I don’t think so, because he never turned up again.”

“ But where did he get to, then ? ”

“ He might have been knocked to pieces by a shell while his body was lying there. With all those thousands of shells flying about, the dead get bombarded as well as the living.”

After this Lady Cynthia had no further doubt, and allowed Mr. Ebbutt to order the memorial brass of Roger, which he was anxious to put up in the church. At the same time she went to Grace, and said, “ I think you might have compassion on poor Mr. Ebbutt.”

“ I see no reason why I should marry him,” said Grace. “ I can’t give him a wife’s affection, and I give him practically the whole of my society.”

Lady Cynthia thought her own thoughts, but she was a wise woman, and knew that the best way to move Grace was to agree with her that there was no reason why she should be moved. That made Grace wonder if she was right, and paved the way for her father.

“ You will remember, Grace dear,” he said, “ my asking you if you would marry Mr. Ebbutt when you received the proofs that Roger was dead ? ”

“ Yes, but . . . ”

“ You refused. I was going to add that. You did refuse, but it is hardly the same thing now, when the contingency has happened, as it was while it was in the air.”

"But it does not alter that other fact—that Mr. Ebbutt is not a man whom I could marry."

"I suppose not," he said disappointedly. It was a crushing blow to him that she should let a girlish fancy, as he considered it, stand in the way of the consummation of his fairest wishes.

* * * * *

It was late on a June afternoon that Mr. Ebbutt and Grace were seated in the auditorium of the theatre, looking over the copy of that wonderful ruin, the proscenium of the Graeco-Roman theatre at Taormina, also over the whole town, which so recalled the original Taormina that sits enthroned on the heights above the Strait of Messina.

"Does it remind you a little bit, Miss Grace?"

"It reminds me a great deal. If I half-shut my eyes, I can imagine myself there. Once more rock, sand and sea stretch away from beneath me in long bands of brown and gold and blue; once more I see cape after cape retreating into the distance. Once more I am gazing from that hot hillside on the snow-mantled shoulders of Etna."

"I am afraid that I can't put Mount Etna into the picture. That would be too big a slice of the melon, even for me. But I would do anything I could for you, Miss Grace."

"You are far too good to me, Maecenas. I wish I could do anything for you in return."

"You can, you know."

"Oh, that!" Her first impulse was to shrivel into her shell; she no longer flew into passions with him. Then she remembered what Brooke Sylvester had said, and having the New Taormina before her eyes, she admitted its truth, and asked gently—almost humbly: "Would you care for the poor bit of my heart which does not lie buried on that mountain of unnamed dead in Picardy?"

"I should cherish one drop of its blood above all my possessions."

"But it would not be mine to give, you know, because I vowed to Roger Wynyard that if ever he came back I would marry him the first minute afterwards. And, even

if I promised you, and he came in time, I should go straight to him, for my promise was to him first, and it is now sealed in his blood. That is why I cannot marry you, dear Maecenas."

"But you can, Grace, for I accept the conditions. To have been engaged to you for only one hour would be the fairest fruit of my life."

"Then you wish it?"

"More than anything else in the world."

"I will not gainsay you any longer, for I owe you so much—not in wealth, for I have not taken anything from you, except the few pounds I earned by my painting; but in life, for I had no interests left in life when you allowed me to participate in the glorious creation which you have planted on our Devonshire hills. My mind has had one long feast ever since you began your work. If it be true that the function of Art is to create beauty, you have been a great artist, Maecenas."

"No, I have not been an artist—only what you call a Maecenas. But think how eternally grateful I should be for that—that I, a common china-maker from Ohio, should have been privileged to create a landscape which the voyagers on the great ocean-liners, as they pass the twin heads of Seacombe, will turn to gaze at, and people will come long railway-journeys just to say that they have seen it—the beauty-spot of the Mediterranean transported to Northern shores."

Grace felt inclined to say, "Yes, the critic may mock you, and say that it is vulgar to do such a thing, but you will have been the first to do it, and before the United States are fifty years older, your example will be copied all over America, to delight millions who will never have the opportunity of seeing the originals."

She did not say it—it would have been *bathos* to say it. But she felt the immensity of the possibilities of this new form of Art.

"Grace, may I tell your father?" he asked.

"Of course, and anyone else you choose. Everyone seems anxious for me to do it, because they know how good you are, and what you can offer me. But I cannot

marry you for a long while yet—I don't know how long, for it will not be until my heart tells me that Roger is dead, and my heart still tells me that he will return, so the day cannot be yet."

* * * * *

He had gained the consent which he so coveted, but he was fearful still. He wondered if he should ever kiss the beautiful lips which had made the promise.

He started. He dreamed that he had heard a bird of ill-omen moaning to him that she never would be his, that her boy-hero would rise from his grave to step between them. But it was only a gull sailing seaward to his couch on the summer wave.

This was in a day-dream while he sauntered down through the dusk to the little watchmaker in Seacombe, who also kept the few poor jewels which might be purchased in the place. The millionaire threw down a shilling for the evening's hire of a certain article, and went back to Via Pacis with it in his pocket.

He need not have been so apprehensive about those lips, for when he called after dinner, she received him alone, and met him at the door with an ungrudged kiss.

"I know what an engaged girl ought to do," she said. "I have been engaged before—for one day."

He could read the agony which underlay the jest, but the jest had a kindly purpose, to tell the lover that he was to have the rights of a betrothed.

"See, Grace," he said, producing from his pocket the cluster of brass rings with numbers on them which jewellers use to take the measure of a finger.

"For the ring?" she said, putting out her hand with a smile in which he read a note of pathos.

"It needn't cost much; it will be a very little one," he said. He did not tell her that a representative of Tiffany's would be leaving London at midnight with various styles of settings for her to choose from, for the stone which he had ordered for her.

He did not stay with her long; he excused himself on the ground that he had promised to have a long talk with

her father. He did not wish to weary her, and he had a matter to attend to at home after that.

But he came back after breakfast the next morning, accompanied by a tall young man, who looked so much more a millionaire than he did and bowed very low to Grace in the bare Abbot's Lodging.

The morocco leather pouch which the tall young man produced from a deep pocket on the inner face of his waist-coat contained a number of magnificent diamond rings, with various kinds of settings. All of them fitted Grace. Mr. Ebbutt had sent a trunk 'phone of her size to this young man, who was waiting for it at the shop, at ten p.m. Tiffany's would not think it good business to leave a man of Mr. Ebbutt's wealth untempted by sending down empty settings, even if they had them.

"Am I to choose whichever of these rings I prefer?" said the dazzled Grace. "I would much rather have a less valuable one."

"Whichever setting you prefer," said Mr. Ebbutt. "I have chosen a much more valuable stone than any of these for your ring."

"What wicked waste!" protested the practical Grace, who had now known poverty for two years, and wondered how many years of their present income these things represented.

"Not at all," said Mr. Ebbutt. "Good diamonds, bought from reliable people, are a constant form of insurance among wealthy Jews."

"Well, if you put it like that, Maecenas, I shall not feel so guilty. Of course, I'm frightfully grateful to you for wanting to give me such a lovely present. Only I did not think that it was right."

"Show her the stone I have chosen, Mr. Chapin," said the millionaire, and from another inside pocket the jeweller produced a smaller morocco case, from which, further enclosed in many wrappings, he produced a large rose-coloured diamond of extraordinary brilliance for its colour.

"There, madame," he said, "you behold the famous 'pink diamond,' which would have belonged to an Empress, but for the revolution in Brazil."

"I have known for years that Tiffany's possessed this diamond, and the price they put on it, but I never thought of purchasing it until I had a reason, and what better reason could anyone need than I have?" Mr. Ebbutt said gallantly.

"Is it really an investment for you to put so much money into your wife's diamonds?—tell me truly."

"Honestly—it is quite sound."

"Then I shall be extravagantly proud of owning such a famous diamond," confessed Grace, and proceeded to choose a setting.

"Well, make it up in that setting, and send it down again in the least number of days that can be managed, please," said Mr. Ebbutt to the jeweller. "Would you like my housekeeper to send you up some luncheon before you go?"

"No, thank you, sir. She gave me such a very substantial breakfast."

It took few minutes to pack up so many thousand pounds' worth of gems, and Mr. Ebbutt took Grace out to see some work on the estate, at the same time as he showed the jeweller to the monastery gate, where the car was waiting to take him back to the station. He wished to spare her the embarrassment of thanking him.

* * * * *

It was the sudden arrival of Hestia Myrtle at Via Pacis—something which she discovered from Hestia—which made Grace give up waiting for Roger, and agree to fix a date for her wedding.

She arranged with Mr. Ebbutt that it should take place in less than two months, and at an early day he motored his beautiful *fiancée*, with her father, into Plymouth, to see their mutual lawyer, Mr. Skewen.

The settlements were of the simplest, though they involved such a large amount of money. The item of overpowering interest to Mr. Lorraine was that the entire Seacombe and Via Pacis estate, which he had sold to Mr. Ebbutt, was at his son-in-law's death to pass back to Grace and her heirs, and that even during his lifetime all moneys

arising from it were to be paid over to her as a jointure, thus giving her personal control of the money to which she would some day have succeeded if her father had not been ruined by the war.

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Retiring and unpresuming as Mr. Ebbutt was, and flattered as she was to possess it, wearing the famous diamond was like a gnawing pain to Grace. For she could not move her left hand without its radiance and magnificence arresting her eye.

And what was it? Not only a glorious gem shining on a white and slender hand, but an outward and visible sign that she had abandoned all hope of Roger's return, and consented to be bound to another—who, though, inside his skin, he was one of the dearest and worthiest men she had ever met, yet was so different from the boy who had gone forth in the flower of his youth and strength and manly beauty, bursting with joy and pride that at last he was going to be allowed to risk his life for his country, and had sealed his high purpose with his blood.

And her *fiancé* had accentuated her pain by putting up in the parish church, with Mr. Wynyard's permission, one of the new brasses, showing Roger in uniform—a fine portrait as well as a fine revival of a medieval art.

As the time for her wedding drew near, she grew more and more depressed about it. And her pain was aggravated by the fact that she had to keep it a secret from the two people with whom her life was principally spent—her father and Mr. Ebbutt, a father who looked a different man since he saw his misfortunes retrieved, and a *fiancé*, who was so devoted and asked so little.

CHAPTER XLI

THE VILLA ELENA : HOW GRACE TOOK HESTIA TO HER BOSOM

NEAR the southern edge of Taormina stands a beautiful little palazzo, once occupied by an English poetess and song-writer. Exquisite portions of its Gothic exterior remain, while its interior has the picturesqueness and conveniences of an old farmhouse modernized for a week-end cottage. One of its special charms is a large palm garden, surrounded by a high wall, pierced in two places by Gothic windows, taken from some demolished palace.

Grace knew that poetess well, and had taken various photographs of the house and garden. The Villa Elena, as it is called, was one of the first features overlooked by his architect which she induced Mr. Ebbutt to introduce into the New Taormina.

But Mr. Jones was enthusiastic when once his attention had been called to it, because he saw that, given a good aspect to make it a sunbath, a garden with such a wall to protect it from the wind presented the best chances for growing at Via Pacis the palms, aloes, cacti, the gigantic stocks, the air-sweetening friesias of Sicily. He made that garden on the hill-slope, excavating it to fifty feet down from the top of its enclosing wall on the upper side.

Hestia, since the success of "The C.O.," the musical-comedy published in her own name, had been selling at fancy prices all the songs she had written since she went to Via Pacis. She had, fortunately, when they had been offered all round the trade in vain, always piled them

in the empty wardrobe of the third bedroom in her little monk's house, and had forgotten them until she was so pestered by agents to write them a song for this or that singer or revue. She had the temperament of the age ; that was why her music suited the public taste so well.

She had accumulated two thousand pounds, and her income was always increasing, because her brief collaboration with Dal Dryander had taught her the various kinds of rights which each musical production ought to yield, and always to stand out for advances and royalties, instead of selling anything right out.

Feeling the need of a holiday in May, having been exploited by shrewd agents for the London season, she had gone down to her apartments at Via Pacis, which she had been obliged to resign on account of the increase in her income, but would not have to vacate until the end of the year.

As Hestia was unaware that anyone at Via Pacis knew of her liaison with Roger, she had no *mauvaise honte* in meeting Grace or any of the Fellowship, and by a stern effort Grace made herself greet her as if nothing had happened. She did not forget that it might give her some clue for judging Roger ; it would at any rate show her how Hestia had come through the ordeal.

It certainly had not degraded her, any more than her success had spoiled her. Beyond the fact that her mourning came from very expensive shops, and that she was daintier than ever about her gloves and slippers, there was nothing to show that she was a lion—except that she had beside her piano a pile of music which bore her name. She was in mourning because she had heard from Mr. Sylvester that Roger's death was now confirmed.

She was fascinated with the New Taormina, and forced Grace, in spite of herself, to show her over it. What fascinated her most was the Villa Elena.

She went by herself the next day to Mr. Ebbutt's agency in the town, and finding that the rent was only fifty pounds a year, and that the terms of the lease were three, seven, or fourteen years, decided to take it at once.

The agent asked her for references (for which she gave

her banker and Mr. Sylvester, who had welcomed her with sincere homage), and informed her that all lettings on the estate were subject to the approval of Mr. Ebbutt. Her application should be forwarded to Mr. Ebbutt's lawyers at Plymouth that very afternoon, and no unnecessary delay would be incurred.

Her name meant nothing to him. He congratulated himself on a piece of good business, and thought that he would very likely get a telephone from Plymouth settling the matter up "right away." He could not anticipate what a storm his letter would raise in the sanctum of Mr. Skewen.

"It's a plot—it's a damnable plot!" cried the ordinarily peaceful and sanctimonious man. "However," he added, "there's one thing to be thankful for—a word from Miss Lorraine to Mr. Ebbutt and she won't get her lease."

So great a personage was Miss Lorraine in his eyes since her engagement that he took the train down to Via Pacis to consult her wishes in a personal interview.

In her presence his steam evaporated. In spite of what had happened, and her determination never to be friends with Hestia again, Grace had felt a thrill of pleasure when she had encountered Hestia, sublimely unconscious, feeding the pigeons in the cloister. They, at any rate, could see no change in her; they were sitting on her wrists and shoulders as confidently as when she used to come into the cloister every morning.

"That woman," the lawyer had begun, "wishes to take the house, provisionally named the Villa Elena, in New Taormina."

"Is there anything to prevent her doing so?" asked Grace, not thinking of the personal equation.

"Well, you don't want her living there, right under your eyes, after what she has done, I take it?"

"If she isn't living there, she could be living in the monastery, which is nearer, couldn't she?" asked Grace.

She was only asking for information, but it sounded to the lawyer like an objection.

"Not for long. She has resigned already, under Rule ten, and she has to vacate on the thirty-first of December."

"Of course! I forgot," she said, and waited for him to proceed.

"Will you mention the matter to Mr. Ebbutt, or shall I?"

"Oh, I think you'd better put the application forward in the usual way. It has nothing to do with me—yet—whom Mr. Ebbutt accepts for his tenants."

"But it has something to do with you, Miss Lorraine, for she will still be here when you are married, and Mr. Ebbutt knows nothing, so he will pass her."

"I never contemplated anything else. I see no reason why she should not be passed."

"But you know what has happened."

"Do you expect me to be hard on her, when she is in decent mourning for Mr. Wynyard instead of engaging herself to be married?" blazed out Grace. She had an heiress's temper at times.

"Oh, as you wish. She has given Mr. Sylvester as a reference, and with his backing, of course it will go through."

"Say that I wish it, too, Mr. Skewen, will you?"

"It shall be done." He strongly disapproved, but as his object in coming had been to please Grace, it was not politic to oppose her.

When the letter agreeing to Hestia's tenancy arrived, it was stated to be on the recommendation of Brooke Sylvester, Esq., and Miss Grace Lorraine.

Hestia went to look for Grace. It was the proverbial coal of fire on her head that Grace should do this, though Grace might not know the just cause and impediment against it.

But Hestia thanked her as if she had known, and the warmth of her gratitude came like balm out of Gilead to Grace, for it was as though Hestia was striving to make the *amende*.

"Hestia," she said, "play to me. Saul never wanted to hear David on his harp more than I want to hear your fingers wandering over the keys, in one of those things which never ended, in which you were playing your mood, and not keeping to any tune."

Hestia sat down to the piano, and played Tommy Atkins's music—defiant ragtime march-tunes, merry patter-tunes, sung by music-hall lions, and sentimental ballads, like "Keep the Home Fires Burning," winding up with "Drake's Drums" and "Admirals All."

Neither of them mentioned Roger, but Grace knew that Roger must have been present to Hestia's mind from the first note to the last, only she pictured Roger standing where Hestia's eyes were on him, and Hestia pictured him behind her with his hand on her hair.

Neither thought of him mournfully. To both he was the gay, gallant Englishman of his breeding, who will go all the way to the Equator to meet lions or what more formidable game he can find.

"Oh, Hestia," said Grace, completely forgetting her resolutions about the girl, "I can't thank you enough! Come often and play to me, won't you? You set the springs of my heart running again. Now let's go and see your house, shall we, for a tonic the other way? It was built from photographs which I took of Maud White's house at Taormina. Horace Jones had forgotten it, so I may be able to help you with some suggestions, if you want them."

"Want them?" said Hestia. "I should think I did! —I've no ideas beyond draperies."

"I'll ask Mr. Ebbutt if I may give you some of the Sicilian drawn-thread work which I left in the house when it was sold, and some of the Caltagirone pots. He can easily spare some—there are plenty of them."

"It would be very nice to have some real Sicilian things in it, but I couldn't take them from you, Grace. You'll want them yourself when you're married, to remind you of old times."

She said this because she felt as if she could not let Grace make her presents. But her remorse was ill-timed, for it made Grace answer very hurriedly:

"I shan't want to recall old times, Hestia. I shall feel more like wanting a new heaven and a new earth."

"Why, aren't you happy, Grace?"

"On your honour, you won't tell anybody, Hestia?"

“On my honour.”

“Well, then, how could I be happy? Maecenas—that’s Mr. Ebbutt—is a perfect darling, and he’s awfully good to me. But I promised to wait for Roger, and I don’t believe that Roger’s dead—even now.”

“Why, I heard that you had had positive news of it from an officer in his Regiment, before you consented to marry Mr. Ebbutt!”

“Yes, we had—he’s a Captain Dicey, and he’s staying at the sanatorium still.”

“Then why don’t you believe it?”

“I’ve got a presentiment that it is not true. They never found his body, you know, and that’s what makes me so unhappy about marrying Mr. Ebbutt.”

Hestia did not hear the last part of the sentence.

“Oh, Grace,” she cried, “do you think it could be true the other way?”

“Yes, I believe it—in the bottom of my heart.”

“Oh, Lord, what a *Magnificat* I’d raise!” She did not think of what Grace might think—she did not remember Grace at all, or anybody, or anything else. She was obsessed with the one single thought, that Roger might yet be on the earth. Her eyes were full of the light which never was on land or sea.

Grace’s heart went out to her for loving him so. “Oh, Hestia,” she said, “I’m so glad that you’re back! You’re the one person here with whom I dare to be natural. . . . What are you going to call your house, dear? Shall you let it remain the Villa Elena?”

“No—people would think that I drop my h’s.”

“What shall you call it, then?”

“Mr. Sylvester says I ought to call it the *Domus Vestae*—Hestia is the Greek for Vesta, you know.”

“I didn’t—is it?”

“He says so. I suppose I got it through my mother. She belonged to one of the pure Greek families which you only meet in the islands; her name was Murtos. My father married her on one of his cruises.”

“She might have been a Lesbian, Hestia.”

“Perhaps—I don’t know.” Hestia did not know

that Sappho was a Lesbian, and Grace did not explain. But it explained a good deal to Grace, who had prejudices about Southern European morals.

"Murtos, my mother's name, means Myrtle," said Hestia, harking back. "That's the reason why I called myself 'Hestia Myrtle,' so it isn't as far-fetched as it sounds. I think I shall call it The Myrtle House, and have banks of myrtle just opposite the windows in the garden-wall, to justify the name to sightseers who invade my privacy through the windows."

"Yes, that's a pretty name," said Grace. "Let's hurry up and get there."

CHAPTER XLII

HOW MR. SHAPLEY ACCUSED HESTIA IN GRACE'S PRESENCE

THE co-operative stores of New Taormina had an excellent furnishing department, where at co-operative prices Hestia was able to buy all the everyday necessities of furniture. Her drawing-room and dining-room and study she furnished from the art dealers of Exeter and Plymouth, to which Grace and Mr. Ebbutt motored her.

Grace helped her daily and hourly in pushing forward her preparations, so as to have the house ready for the summer and autumn holidays, which Hestia intended to spend at The Myrtle House, where she would have far more leisure for composing than she could command in London.

While she was helping her to furnish, Grace could not but notice how Roger pervaded the house. In the study where Hestia did her composing, there hung over the piano in a frame of silver bay-leaves the full-length photograph of Roger in uniform, taken just before he went down to Seacombe to say good-bye—the photograph from which Mr. Ebbutt had had the memorial brass executed. There were Kodaks of Roger, or taken by Roger, on every mantelpiece; there were articles with regimental devices everywhere, and on her dressing-table was the gold matchbox with the Regimental crest and that inscription on it which made it so incriminating.

Grace longed to discover from Hestia how, in the face of this evidence and the evidence which had been betrayed

to her, it had been possible for Roger, after a day of confusion and doubt, to come back prepared for an immediate marriage with her. To do anything scurvy or mean was not in Roger's large nature. She was certain that there was some explanation, and was hoping that it would come out incidentally, so as to save her from the dreadful ordeal of questioning Roger, if he came back from the dead.

But Hestia threw no light on the subject ; it was obvious that she adored him, and the adoration which she paid to him could not but have its effect in stimulating the feelings of the other, who had a hundred or a thousand memories of him where Hestia had one. His manly graces, his chivalry, his affection, his contagious gaiety, stood out ; his slackness about the realities of life was lost in the Great Shadow, expiated by his having been caught up in the Fiery Chariot.

By degrees the girls, losing their shyness of each other, fell to talking of Roger and his endearing qualities, and then Grace saw more than ever how truly Hestia loved him. Hestia, with the Bohemian vein in her nature, was better able to understand how Roger could be so happy-go-lucky without detracting from his character. While she was living in Chelsea some of the best and most brilliant people she knew, men and women, in whom genius and solid worth had been equally prominent, had shown no thought for the morrow. There were great actors, for instance, who mounted Shakespearean plays as if they were kings, and kept a whole regiment of people in sure and constant prosperity, but often had to borrow ready-money from their servants.

To Grace this seemed simply incredible, though it was no more foolish than her father's having lost his fortune in the way he did.

There were points about Roger which had annoyed her almost beyond endurance ; his very faults endeared him to Hestia.

Yes ! Hestia's love for him would have inflamed her own, even if the hero-worship in which they indulged had not painted him in such glowing colours.

Certainly, beside this Mr. Ebbutt was not a heroic

figure. He moved badly as well as talked badly ; he walked on his heels like a Nonconformist clergyman, and his clothes, admirably cut as they were, besides being gloomy in tint, drooped on him. His heart was of gold, but it was inside a quaint casket, and Providence had burdened Grace with a fastidious eye.

And having Hestia, she was not so dependent on him for companionship. Rather did she feel like Jephthah's daughter, consoling herself with her girl friends before her father sacrificed her to reward the Deity. It was not that she was a whit the less grateful to Mr. Ebbutt, or really liked him less. She was merely growing more and more conscious that he was not her ideal husband.

Hestia, as may be imagined, was the idol of the community. Her beauty, her generosity, her light-heartedness and her brilliant playing, had always made her a favourite, and now that she had conferred lustre on the community with her success, while she was just as unpretentious and friendly, she was at the high tide of popularity.

This was gall and bitterness to Dal Dryander, who had lately come down for the summer, and he wrote to the younger Skewen to know if he meant to earn his money.

The hunchback turned over expedients in his mind, and came to the conclusion that nothing short of confronting the two women together with the evidence would succeed.

But how to do it ? He, of course, could not act himself ; it would be too dangerous, and he had not the courage or the tact. He must leave action to the detective, who seemed willing to do anything for pay. Audacity seemed to him the best as well as the simplest way.

So Mr. Shapley, the private inquiry-agent, was promised a hundred pounds to carry out the job, and came down to Seacombe in the guise of a traveller for electric stoves, visiting Mr. Dryander among others. By him he was carefully instructed in the habits of the two girls, and having watched Grace into Hestia's garden, and seen, through the windows in the wall, the pair of them make

their way to a part remote from the house, he boldly walked in, and went up to them. Taking off his hat to Grace, he said, "I am Detective Shapley, who wrote to you about a lady who passed herself off as the wife of Lieutenant Wynyard, of the East Surrey Regiment. This is the lady who was at the *Hôtel de Luxe* with Lieutenant Wynyard. You would not believe me. Here she is."

Grace was furious. "I never asked you for evidence," she said. "I refused to take any notice of the matter at all, and you know that perfectly well, and I am going in to telephone for a policeman, unless you leave the garden instantly."

"Madame, there will not be the slightest occasion to do that. I only came into the garden to do you a service, and if you do not esteem my services, I have no desire to force them upon you."

He could afford to be polite, for he imagined that his poisoned dart had gone home.

Mr. Skewen, junior, thought differently. Mr. Dryander's spite had already been vented on Grace, when she was first informed of the incident: it might have poisoned her married happiness with Roger. But his principal spite was against Hestia, and it was because Grace had failed him altogether in that campaign that he had begun another. It was not Grace, but everyone else at *Via Pacis* whom on this occasion he wished to be informed. By hook or by crook Mr. Dryander intended Hestia to be hounded from *Via Pacis*, including New Taormina.

Mr. Skewen, junior, accordingly informed the detective that his employer would pay no remuneration or expenses for this trip, but that he would reward him with double the fee when he had effected the purpose for which he was sent.

Private Detective Shapley, after a few days spent in preparations, took the train back to Seacombe Road. Before he could take any further steps in the matter he had something to say to Mr. Dryander.

CHAPTER XLIII

WHAT HESTIA AND GRACE TOLD EACH OTHER WHEN
MR. SHAPLEY HAD GONE

HESTIA mistook the expression on Grace's face. She thought it said, "Well, Hestia, what have you to say?" whereas it really meant something entirely different.

"I did go to the 'de Luxe' with Roger," she confessed. "Can you ever forgive me, Grace?"

"I could forgive any woman's losing her head with Roger."

Hestia thought that she meant because he was so attractive, but Grace meant that he would be so innocently guilty. Grace herself was not the woman to yield to a sudden temptation.

"I have always been in love with Roger, but he never was in love with me, though he asked me to marry him."

"When?" asked Grace, rather eagerly.

"Oh, at Kingsburgh, on the Saturday before you told him that he could marry you. I knew—everyone at Via Pacis knew—that you had persistently refused him."

"And what did you say to him?—No, I suppose I have no right to ask that!"

"Why not? I don't tell everybody, but I told Roger, and I will tell you, that I was married already, to a beast of a husband, whom I had not seen for years, and whom I meant to divorce at the first opportunity which he gave me."

"Poor Hestia! And I took him away from you as soon as you were married to him—in that way."

"It was my fault, not his. But when he came back from Seacombe—having quarrelled with you . . ."

"It wasn't a quarrel. . . . It was Roger's first proper assertion of spirit—he was refusing to be the spaniel any longer."

"Well, when Roger came back from Seacombe, an exiled lover . . ."

"Abdicated."

" . . . An abdicated lover, and was on his way to the front, my heart went out to him." Then, somehow, in sentences too broken for print, she managed to convey to Grace how she had taken him to the Musical Comedy dinner, how jealous she had been because he was monopolized by the beauties of the stage to whom she had introduced him, and how, when the Zeppelin attack had forced them to pass the night at a hotel, she had succumbed to the temptation as they were entering the Hôtel de Luxe—at a moment while the ink was hardly dry in the letter which Grace had written when she had made up her mind to marry him.

Hestia was honest ; she did not put it down to nervousness alone, though it was that which supplied the irresistible momentum.

Then for a while the shame of her confession struck her dumb, but Grace, who had forborne from interrupting, said, "The best thing I can do to comfort you, dear, is to tell you that it is an old story to me. I have forgiven you long ago. That reptile who has been here just now wrote and told me about it soon after Roger went to France."

"And you forgave me, Grace ? "

"I forgave you, even when I did not know that you had a husband living, and could only marry Roger in this way."

"It is generous of you to call it that. But it was not a deliberate union of those who could not be united in marriage. It was an impromptu act of feminineness in which fright, love, jealousy and selfishness were all urging."

"I don't know which is the easiest or hardest to forgive.

But I hope that my trespasses may be forgiven as heartily as I have forgiven this trespass against myself."

"How could you trespass, Grace, with your serene innocence?"

"Not, I think, in that way, but there are sins more subtle into which the Ice-maiden herself might fall."

"I think you may rest assured."

"I would I might. May I ask you a question, Hestia—which I never thought that one decent woman could have asked of another decent woman?"

"I have not the right to refuse to answer any question from you."

"This is my question: If Roger were alive, and because you could not marry him, asked you to be his unwedded wife, would you do it openly before God and man?"

"I would do it openly before God and man and this little village, where the mills of scorn would grind us into smaller dust than anywhere else on the earth."

"Hestia, I never knew what generosity meant before. You remember Our Lord saying 'Greater love hath no man than this, that a man lay down his life for his friends'? It would be as true to say 'Greater love hath no woman than this, that a woman lay down her love for her friend.' Love is life to a woman. She does not live for works, but for faith. It is man who must have everything concrete; few men are born with the fine abstraction of a woman, and those few must preach with word or pen, or they will perish by the way."

"Are men so different from women?"

"Take Roger. You know what a ripping man he was. His flesh was willing, but his spirit weak. He would go through hell for his country, or either of us. He had the highest ideals of the Public School boy's code. Yet when I offered him his heart's desire, he allowed you to sacrifice yourself in his place, because he let himself believe that your love was nothing in respect of his, that you were only giving up a toy, where he would be giving up his soul, or his faith, or something precious. What right had he to believe that the love of which you

had just given him the highest proof that a woman who is pure in heart can give, was a cut flower, which might be thrown away, while his was a living plant, to be watered and fenced? Men are too apt to think of 'Eveleen's Bower' in that light."

"You're too hard on him, Grace. I was honest when I said what I said to him that morning—that was why he listened to me. I had wanted Roger to make love to me, always. If he had been like the brilliant Bohemians I knew in Chelsea, the men who made life as full of colour for us as lords and cavalry officers make it for the Society maiden, do you think that he would have spared me as he did? I should have been his willing victim long before. I had no strength to resist him, no desire to, no principles to overcome. I was just his for the asking, and he never dreamed it. Until that night he never once kissed me or caressed me in a way that a man would have been ashamed to caress a flapper."

It did not make it easier for Grace to know how chivalrous Roger had been. From Hestia's own lips she had heard that Roger had fulfilled the conditions which she meant to lay down for him if their engagement was to be followed by marriage. But now a fresh problem beset her. Had she been blameless? Was she not forced to confess to herself that she knew that Roger's hesitation on that night in New Bedford Place must be based on something deeper than pique? Was it like Roger to fling away the prize, for which he had been straining all his life, in a fit of pique?

She might have known that it was something which touched Roger's honour that made him hesitate. She might have known that it was some great thing which let Roger so much as hesitate.

She had done no probing. She had taken it for granted that his heart was sound. And the irony of it was that she had not wanted him then, that she had only acted in the way she did so as not to fail him. If she had but known that he had other wishes, she had a double reason for not marrying him.

And the cruellest irony of all was that now that she

knew how he had striven with himself—that happy-go-lucky self—before and after that night when the powers of the air were loosed, she loved him and hungered for him more than she ever had before. The evil that this man had done had not lived after him. It had been buried with him.

It was her turn now to offer up a burnt sacrifice. She said nothing. She only kissed Hestia. But Hestia could see that a mighty struggle had been passing, and that it was now spent, though she looked in vain for the expression of relief which she had expected to dawn over Grace's face.

CHAPTER XLIV

GRACE HURRIES ON HER MARRIAGE WITH MR. EBBUTT

IT was in a repentant mood that Grace went up to the Manor House the next morning.

"I am afraid that I have been neglectful, Maecenas, in my excitement over helping Hestia to get her house ready. It was like building another Taormina on a small scale—trying to make the Villa Elena look still Sicilian after it was furnished."

"I did not find you neglectful, Grace. When you're going to be mine all my life, I can't expect you to *go on* being as energetic as you were over the 'Greek-or-Roman' theatre." He used the phrase as a joke now. The first time he had used it, she showed him the words "*Graeco-Roman* theatre," printed under a picture in a book, and he had understood.

"Yes, I am going to be yours all my life, and I'm going to try to be just as unremitting as I was when we were having that glorious excitement. I will try hard."

"You make me feel as if I were your father, and you were a prodigal daughter—*L'Enfant Prodigue*—I know the French for that. . . . I saw it at the Duke of York's Theatre."

"*L'Enfant Prodigue*' does not mean 'a prodigal daughter,' but 'the prodigal son.'"

"I don't run foreign languages so fine as that," he said; he had made a bad joke—he knew it was a bad joke—to hide his emotion. Grace had never made such a direct protestation to him before.

"Our wedding-day will be in a fortnight," she said. "I wonder why we put it off so long? We might just as well have had it sooner."

"We should have had it that very day if I could have said what I felt. But you know why we put it off. We wanted to make perfectly certain that poor Roger Wynyard was dead."

Grace was intensely grateful to him for the fine feeling which made him say *we* instead of *you*, but she said, "Yes, it was my wish, I know, but I wish that I hadn't wished it now. It is such a strain on one's nerves, this waiting, waiting, though one knows that it will never happen."

"But, Grace," he said, taking courage from her affection and submissiveness, "if you wish to change the day, it can be changed. I have only to go up to London for a license, and then we can be married the day after to-morrow. The Rev. Mr. Wynyard is at home."

"Well, go, dear, and let's get it over."

"I will go. The villagers will be rather disappointed—they were going to have made a very grand affair of it."

"Never mind. It will save them a lot of money," she said, in what seemed to him a strange voice. "They can't have begun their preparations yet."

"And I'll telephone to Goodbody at once that the wedding-breakfast and fête will be the day after to-morrow, instead of Tuesday week."

"Need we have them, if we hasten on the marriage?"

So accustomed was she to his falling in with her arrangements, that she expected him to say no, but he said, in the most conciliatory way, it is true, but quite firmly, "Yes, we must have the wedding-breakfast and the fête. We can easily send round word of the change of date. Mr. Skewen at Plymouth is the only person invited who does not live in the neighbourhood."

He almost made up for his refusal by not asking her reasons for wishing to dispense with ceremonies. He attributed it to the same nervous excitement which had made her wish the wedding hurried on.

To smooth his refusal, he said, "I should be very glad to

dispense with the ceremonies myself, but it would never do for the new owner to marry the old Squire's daughter, and restore the property to the race which has held it for four hundred years, without killing the baron of beef—I've ordered a baron of beef. I gave that Plymouth caterer, Goodbody, the order for everything weeks ago, so I don't expect that there will be many hitches, though he has got to speed up. He must do it on his third gear."

"May we go to John o' Groats for our honeymoon?"

"What's John o' Groats, Grace?"

"The farthest point north in Scotland."

"It's out of bounds, I'm afraid. People are only allowed to go half-way up Scotland nowadays. They're stricter with Scotland than they are with public-houses—though it's nothing to do with whiskey." He felt the importance of being jocular.

"Where can we go so as to have the least chance of meeting anyone we know?"

"Notting Hill—no, Mr. Rufus has got a sister at Notting Hill."

"Seriously," she said, laughing.

"Why, London, of course. There is no place like London for a person who wishes to get away from her friends."

"The best plan will be not to settle on the hotel until we are in the train, then none of our friends here can know."

CHAPTER XLV

WHAT MR. SHAPLEY SAID TO MR. DRYANDER

DAL DRYANDER received his invitation to the wedding. There had been nothing to connect his name with the visits of Private-Detective Shapley, or the letters from Mr. Skewen, junior, to Grace. But he was unable to be present.

He had gone up to town to see that revolting specimen of the disanointed of the Lord, the younger Skewen, after Shapley had called on him to announce the failure of his mission at The Myrtle House.

On his return he received a visit from Shapley, to whom, acting on instructions, Mr. Skewen, junior, had refused to pay his fee of a hundred pounds.

"Show him up, Singer," he said to his servant. Whatever Mr. Dryander's failings were, want of what he called moral courage was not one of them.

"You have come to demand that hundred pounds, I suppose?" he said, when Shapley was shown up to his study. "Well, you won't get it."

"No. As you diddled me out of the hundred, I came to get your cheque for a thousand."

"Is this wit or midsummer madness?"

"It will be madness if you don't give it to me."

"I should be mad if I did. I don't even know what you're trying to blackmail me on."

"Try and guess, Mr. Dryander. You're too modest about your powers of imagination."

"I've had enough of your impudence, Shapley. Get out of my house!"

"Softly, Mr. Dryander, while I make a few remarks about the scenery, to see if that will put you into a more amiable mood.

"Your house, to start with, has a very pleasant position. You are nearer the sea than any other inhabitant of Seacombe or *Via Pacis* except the coastguard . . ."

"I have never thought about it, but I expect I am."

"Naturally, it was a matter of no importance to you," he said, looking towards the composer for his assent.

"None whatever."

"You also enjoy an excellent view. You can look right down the inlet to the open sea, and people out at sea can get a full view of your charming house."

"I suppose so."

"That again is a matter of no importance to you, although perhaps you like to watch the pleasure-boats. You enjoy these innocent pleasures. You are also a humorist, Mr. *Dalberg* Dryander; you like to frighten people at night by imitating German lamp-signalling from your top-windows?"

"Look here, Shapley, you're going a great deal too far! I've put up with your impudence so far, but unless you clear out at once, I'll ring the bell for my man, first of all to hear what you are saying, so that I may prosecute you for blackmailing, and then to throw you out."

"The bodyguard, who changed his name from Schlesinger to Ashley Singer, and has special leave from the German War Office to stay in England?"

"I don't know what you mean, but he'll break your neck if I tell him to, without being particular as to the reason."

"No, he won't—he's my friend, not yours. He has been promised his commission on the money I am going to get from you, and in spite of this you are going to keep him on and double his wages."

"Oh, indeed! And now, Shapley, let me inform you that I have been a poker-player—and accustomed to play for very high stakes. I know a good deal about bluffing,

and I'm going to see your hand." Saying this, he rang the bell.

When the man came, a strapping six-footer, of tremendous physical strength, whose bullet-head betrayed his origin, though he had let his hair grow, and brushed it in the English way, Mr. Dryander said :

" Singer, I want you to be a witness of what this man says."

" Yes, sir."

" He is demanding the payment of a thousand pounds—is that not so, Shapley ? "

" Quite in order."

" And to make me pay this, he accuses me of being a German spy." He repeated what Shapley had said, word for word. " Those are your words, I think, Shapley ? "

" As good as shorthand notes."

" And now that you have heard his blackmailing attempts, I want you to put him out, and if he attempts to return, or ever comes here again, set Prinz on him." Prinz was a Great Dane, one of the monsters which are the pride of the German nobility.

" I will go to summon assistance, sir."

" Prinz will do."

" Prinz cannot be found, sir."

" Prinz is at the bottom of the harbour, or I should not be here," said Mr. Shapley. " Dogs are not so easy to corrupt as their masters."

" Well, get some other assistance, Singer, if you need assistance to tackle a man half your size."

" He is not likely to have come unarmed, sir."

" No, I suppose not. Well, you are a witness to his blackmailing—that is enough. He cannot stay here for ever. He will need lunch—or, at any rate, dinner—and they will not be offered to him here."

" Shall I go to find assistance, sir ? "

" I think you'd better, since you're not going to tackle him yourself."

" Before he goes, since you wish him to be a witness of what passes between us, I ask you, are you going to pay me that thousand pounds ? "

"No, I am not."

"Well, then, Schlesinger, ask the constable, who is waiting for me below, to step up."

"Constable?" said Mr. Dryander, changing colour.

"Yes, constable. He thinks I am serving a process on you. Since the amiable Schlesinger has a bad name in the village, the police-sergeant at Seacombe sent orders to the constable who acts as porter at the monastery to accompany me. But he will not have to protect me from Schlesinger—he will hear me denounce you as a German spy, Mr. Dalberg Dryander, and arrest you. I told him to bring his handcuffs with him."

"I'm not frightened of you, Shapley. He won't dare to arrest me without a warrant, and you won't have taken out a warrant, or you would not have imperilled your own freedom by trying to blackmail me. You know that the first thing I should do, if I was arrested, would be to denounce you, and say that the whole charge was trumped up to blackmail me."

"You must think me very simple, Mr. Dryander, to put my head into a noose, unless I was sure of being able to pull it out again. Let me tell you a story.

"There was once a man who employed a poor inquiry-agent to persecute a woman, who was his rival as a composer of musical-comedies. The persecution failed, because another woman, who was expected to make use of the betrayal that this woman was the mistress of her betrothed, refused to make use of such an instrument. The poor inquiry-agent came to report his failure; it was his first call upon the great man who employed him. The door was opened by Fritz here; that aroused suspicions. As the business was so very private, the poor inquiry-agent was shown up into the great man's study. The great man, either because he was not ready, or to show his importance, sent down word that he would have to keep the small man waiting for ten minutes, during which the small man, whose suspicions were aroused by the presence of Fritz in the house, carried out an examination of the study."

Mr. Dryander made a grimace.

"It hardly took him ten seconds to notice that very clumsy spring in the overmantel, and when he pressed it, because this sort of detective-story mystery has a fascination for him, a panel swung open and showed him a complete apparatus for wireless telegraphy, which he happened to understand. It was just the same kind of spring as the one which you have on your overmantel there, Mr. Dryander, as plain as the boil on your nose. We'll just touch that spring, and show you why I did not trouble about a warrant, Mr. Dryander.

"Schlesinger, touch that spring, will you?" continued Shapley, "and show the unsuspecting Mr. Dryander what he has behind his overmantel."

The man-servant touched the spring; a panel swung out, and there was the wireless apparatus as described.

"Shut it up again quickly, Schlesinger," said the inquiry-agent. "It would be so awkward if it was open and the constable came up uninvited.

"When the poor inquiry-agent went back to London, he did not denounce the rich Mr. Dryander. He looked him up in 'Who's Who' to see whose son he was; and in the pages of the ponderous *Vaporeau* he looked up the parentage of Herr Dryander, who is the chief assistant of Herr Wolff in propagating the stories about the Allies, which are chiefly disseminated by wireless.

"Lo and behold, he was born of the same father and mother as our Mr. Dryander—our amiable host here. Possibly the Dryander family, now that letters do not circulate freely between England and Germany, do their family correspondence by wireless."

"I have nothing to do with my brother. I have not seen him since I was a boy," suddenly protested Mr. Dryander.

"Perhaps not," said Shapley, "but the wireless would be useful for signalling to submarines. I was merely giving you your pedigree to show you why you ought not to possess a wireless plant on the shores of a naval harbour."

"I will give you that thousand-pound cheque," said Mr. Dryander desperately.

"Thank you," said Shapley. "That will suit us better than calling in the constable, won't it, Schlesinger? But I

forgot part of my story, Mr. Dryander—I forgot to tell you how the poor inquiry-agent established an understanding with Fritz."

"I don't want to hear anything about that swine. I shall give him a month's wages, and pack him off this very morning."

"You would not be so inconsiderate as that, Mr. Dryander. He might want to turn his knowledge of your goings-on into money. While he stays here there will be honour among thieves."

"How am I to know this?"

"You will have to take it on trust, unless you prefer going to prison to trusting us. I have no love for England. I am not English, neither am I German. But my name is too like a German name for me to use it with proper regard for my health. I hate the English because they hate my profession, and exhibit their contempt for it and me, whenever they are not in my power."

"Then you won't molest me further?"

"Not if you behave yourself—and remember one thing, Dryander."

The composer winced under the familiarity, but managed to screw out "What?"

"That good behaviour means abandoning your persecution of those two women. It's been a dirty job, and I've hated it, and I won't have it carried on any more."

Mr. Dryander muttered something.

"Oh, one other thing—if I were you I should get that wireless business and your signalling-lamps out of the house. I'm not going to give you away unless you give me some reason to—I'm not English, and I don't care what happens to England. It's only because every uninterned German is apt to be Swiss, and we real Swiss are always being taken for Germans, that I'm Shapley and not Schaepli any longer. The reason why I give you this advice is that you've none of the makings of the spy about you, except your notions of honour."

CHAPTER XLVI

THE MARRIAGE OF GRACE LORRAINE

SINCE it was at a season when flowers are very plentiful, and, for the best of reasons, real floral decorations can never be put up more than twenty-four hours in advance, and since the artists of Via Pacis, in whose charge the decorations had been placed, had determined all along that the decorations should be entirely floral, to avoid useless expenditure in war time, the hurrying on of the wedding made little difference to the welcome.

The building contractor, who had a huge repository near the wharf which he had constructed on the inlet, was able to lend them all the ropes and posts and planks they needed, and the services of all the men he had there, who most of them, being Italians, were experts in putting up festival framework. And the whole Fellowship of Via Pacis, with their wives and families, helped eagerly in gathering the flowers and foliage, and festooning them as directed.

But all the flowers and smiles and good wishes of Via Pacis could not lighten the heavy heart of the bride. Not to one living soul except Hestia had she given any hint of the sacrifice she was making, the dread with which she contemplated the future.

To the bridegroom to whom she was sacrificing she was everything which a man could desire in a bride, except desirous. She was submissive, she was affectionate, she was nervously eager to gratify any whim he might have—and he had none, except to please her, and not to deprive Via Pacis and the village of their wedding festivities. It

was in compliance with his wish that, heavy-hearted though she was, she threw herself into them heartily, and behaved with the spirit which a Lorraine coming back to her splendid inheritance should show.

The wedding breakfast was held at the Manor House ; the Abbot's Lodging would not contain it. When Harvey Wynyard had proposed the health of the bride and bridegroom, with due emphasis on the joy of Via Pacis and Seacombe at a Lorraine coming into her own, and the healths had been drunk with indescribable enthusiasm, and the cake had been cut, and the breakfast had broken up, so that the bride might say something to each guest at a reception in the great hall (with the band from the depot of the Devons in the music gallery), Grace made her escape across the rock-garden to her own bedroom, to fetch the dust-cloak which she had left there for the purpose. She had been married in the white cloth gown in which she was to have been married to Roger—she made that part of the cross which she had to bear. It was an admirable travelling dress for a bride.

"I wanted to see you alone, dear, before we started, and this seemed to be the only chance," she said, but she consumed the precious minutes in saying little affectionate things to Hestia until it was time for them to return. It was not until they were about to go downstairs again that she got out what she had brought Hestia upstairs to hear.

"Hestia, I want you to make me a promise. It is not one you can't make—I swear that. Will you make it?"

It would not have been like Hestia to refuse.

"Yes," she answered, gaily and readily, "I promise. What is it?"

"That when Roger comes back, and my heart tells me that he will, if you get your divorce, you will marry him. Otherwise, my sacrifice will have been in vain."

"What do you mean, Grace?"

"I mean that I thought Roger belonged to you, yet because I had promised to marry him when he came back, I should have done it and robbed you of him. I

should never have had the strength to refuse him, when I wanted to marry him, so I have married Mr. Ebbutt to put it out of my power to marry Roger."

" Didn't you wish to marry your husband ? "

" The whole thing has been a nightmare to me. You can't think how I have dreaded it. But I shall never let him know, and you must swear that you will never let anyone know. But I had to tell you to compel you to marry Roger."

" I shan't need any compelling, Grace, if that happy day ever dawns upon the earth, and I can get my divorce. But don't let your husband ever guess that you don't love him—you had better swear that to me, Grace."

" He shall never guess it. I shall be a far better wife to him than if I did love him as other wives love their husbands. Because then I should often be a spoilt child, seeing that I was born spoilt, and have always been encouraged to be spoilt, and he is so much older than I am. But now I shall always be on my guard, against hurting his feelings, and being ungrateful, and the other things that girls do when they have too much given them."

" Put a good face on it, Grace," whispered Hestia, as they re-entered the great hall of the Manor House. Grace, seeing Mr. Ebbutt making his way up the hall, ran after him, and slipping her arm through his, cried :

" Is the car ready for us, Richmond ? "

It was the first time that she had called him by his Christian name, except in the marriage service. She had called him Maecenas during their engagement.

" Allow me to go and see," said Mr. Bernafay.

" Oh, thank you," said Grace, still hanging on to her husband's arm, to show him that he was not to leave her.

Mr. Skewen, senior, approaching the right quarter, obtained permission for the 2.10 p.m. from Plymouth, which only stops at Exeter and Taunton, to stop and pick them up at Seacombe Road.

He was not present at the wedding. Grace had told Mr. Ebbutt that she could not tolerate his presence there, and that he must find some excuse for preventing it.

Mr. Ebbutt's plain Western mind could see no way of doing this except by telling him right out that he would be unable to ask him to be at the wedding because his presence would be painful to Mrs. Ebbutt. He did not say why, nor had he asked why. He supposed that Grace would have told him if it had been proper for him to know.

Mr. Skewen received the announcement by observing with bland politeness that much as he would like to have been present (his exclusion being a serious blow to him professionally), he could not think of doing so if his presence would be painful to the bride.

He attributed it to Grace's having learned that he had caused her father's bankruptcy by urging him to continue his investments in the Union Jack Electrical Association when Mr. Lorraine had determined to withdraw, and was in a terrible fright lest it should lead to his losing Mr. Ebbutt as a client. In reality it was the connection of himself and his son with the persecution of Hestia which had caused his exclusion.

Mr. Ebbutt wisely booked seats for the saloon of the 2.10 p.m., instead of having a compartment reserved for them. He felt that it would give him more confidence.

He had his reward. Grace was so charming to him that no one could have doubted that they were bride and bridegroom, even if Mr. Skewen had not been instructed to send them all the picture papers from Plymouth by the guard.

When he asked her what hotel she would go to, she said the *Savoy*. That, too, was part of her cross, for she imagined that she would meet more of her old friends there than at any hotel in London, if they took their meals in the restaurant.

When they arrived at the hotel, about seven o'clock, he engaged a suite overlooking the river, which was a regular flat, and made her feel that she had suddenly passed from asceticism, if not actual poverty, into a haven of rest and luxury. After the past two years it was an extraordinary sensation, this, of being a millionaire's wife, who could have express trains stopped for her, and

live in the finest suite in one of London's most expensive hotels, for as long as she liked.

"I have ordered dinner in the restaurant; I thought that it would amuse you more."

"Oh, Richmond, you are a darling to do so much for my pleasure!" she said, throwing her arms round his neck, and kissing him as any other girl-wife might have done—except that she did it from the desire to be natural, and not spontaneously. She could not help remembering what irony there lay in the fact that the single day in which she had been engaged to poor Roger was such a valuable training for the part which she was acting.

There was one thing which encouraged her in the situation—after all her fears, she felt no repulsion for her husband; she found it as easy to be affectionate to him as to be affectionate to her father.

When she went in to dress, she found a maid, whom her husband had ordered from a Society bureau which attended to such matters, until she had found a good maid of her own. The old nurse who had maided her at the Manor House, and had followed them to the Abbot's Lodging, would be more needed by her father than ever now that she was taken from him.

The dresses which Grace had brought with her had been modernized by a clever little dressmaker from Plymouth, who went the round of country houses in South Devon, from dresses which she had ordered before their downfall, and hardly used. At Mr. Ebbutt's special request she had bought no trousseau. He was most jealous about her forestalling any pleasure which his money could give her.

"I have put off buying my trousseau until I came to London," she informed the maid, whose experienced eye, as she noticed, had discovered the secret of her dresses. "We live on the coast of Devon, nine miles from a station, so I could not get my outfit before I was married, like a properly brought-up young lady."

"Indeed, ma'am?" said the maid, who was a nice woman. "Your things are so good that you hardly have a right to buy new ones in war time."

" You see, my husband isn't at war—he's an American."

" Oh, that alters the case, ma'am. You'll have to be getting new things and wearing them before you go out."

" He doesn't live in America. He lives in the old place of my family in South Devon."

" Yes, ma'am," said the maid, not knowing what else to say.

" I want to look my best to-night. Will you do your best with me ? "

" I will, ma'am, indeed ! " said the maid, misconstruing her motive.

When she had finished, she could hardly take her eyes off her ; Grace looked so exquisitely lovely. The crowning touch was the softness which had so often been lacking in Grace's beauty. To-night she was very soft, for she was bashful, and nervously anxious not to be lacking in affection.

Her husband was waiting for her when she came into their drawing-room.

" Do I look all right, Richmond ? " she asked.

" You are perfect," he said, speaking from his heart. " But, Grace dear, still call me Maecenas, will you ? That was the name you knew me by when you gave me your affections."

The expression " when you gave me your affections " stung her ; she had given them so inadequately. But if he wished her to call him Maecenas, or any other name, she would do so.

When she took her seat at the table, chosen unctuously by the head waiter for them, and saw the attention which she attracted, she felt a considerable sense of well-being. She thought that they must be looking at the magnificent diamonds which her husband had clasped round her neck just before they came down. With the practicality of a self-made man he had brought them up in his luggage, instead of entrusting them to a fair mark for thieves like a lady's dressing-bag. But if it was, they soon turned from her jewels to her beauty. She was radiant with the excitement of being in the centre of things again. She had determined to make her husband enjoy himself, and

she found herself being as pleased as he was. For one thing, her making herself so charming, and so interested in him, gave him back his natural confidence, and with that his homely wit, for which the scene at the *Savoy* offered much food. Grace loved his wit. If he was in the vein he made her laugh till the tears ran down her cheeks. Nothing which he could do for her advanced him so much in her good graces.

That night he was so happy and in such high spirits, and so tickled by the people round them—it being August, they were not the gilded youth of London, but the gilded middle-age of the provinces—that he fairly outshone himself.

After dinner they sat in the lounge for a while, listening to the gay music of the orchestra, till her spirits began to droop, and her husband thought that she was tired, and had better go up to their own suite.

She was not physically tired, but the gallant young officers, fresh back from the trenches, it might be, or returning to them on the morrow, gave her the “blues.” They all reminded her of Roger—not necessarily in face or figure, but in their high spirits and insouciance. They worshipped at the feet of beauty and played round just as Roger would have played round, and made her think of the might-have-beens.

But as they were going up in the lift, she remembered to put a constraint on herself, and when they got into their own suite, she sat down on the sofa beside her husband with a glad little sigh.

It was such a relief to be delivered from the jackals of remorse. He did not know whether to interpret the sign in his favour or not. But she made him very happy by exclaiming—and with perfect sincerity under the circumstances :

“ It’s so good to be alone with you again, Maecenas ! ”

CHAPTER XLVII

THE HONEYMOON

BEFORE she started for the church, Grace wrote two cheques, one for all the savings of her income, which had been accumulating, and the other for the money which she had earned by her pictures. She made both of them payable to her father, and enclosed them in a letter which she left for him with Rachel Bence. In it she wrote :

“ DEAREST DAD,

“ It gives me the purest pleasure of my life to show my recognition of the generosity with which you overwhelmed me, both before and after our misfortune.

“ As you paid off our creditors in full, no one can touch it, so you will be able to buy books again.

“ And now I must say good-bye for a little while, you best of fathers, being always

“ Your affectionate daughter,

“ GRACE LORRAINE.”

Grace and her husband went up to London on a Thursday. On the Friday morning Grace set forth on the primrose path of buying herself a trousseau with unlimited money. She had only to express a wish to have it gratified.

The first was to hire a car by the week, so that it might always be at the door when she required it. She was given the most luxurious car on the market, to try for

a week, and told that if she took a special fancy to it, she could keep it.

She spent the first few days in buying, buying, buying for her trousseau and her house. She did not buy indiscriminately. Her two years of poverty had taken away the inclination for that. But if she desired a thing, and was satisfied that she was not being swindled, she bought it.

When she was shopping, Mr. Ebbutt began by staying in the car, to read the newspapers, unless she invited him in or sent for him. He desired not to be a tie on her freedom, or a distraction when she wanted to give her attention to something else.

It soon came to, "Maecenas, I want your advice here," for he was patient and uninterfering, but interested and sensible. In a day or two he did not take newspapers in the car.

She did not give up all her time to shopping. She was fond of places like Westminster Abbey, and fond of Bond Street galleries, and was hoping to interest him in them. She found him willing to be interested in anything, and delightfully droll when he could not understand it—an excellent companion to go about with.

At the galleries she had the fresh excitement of being a constant buyer. He liked encouraging living artists when the prices were ticketed, and, as he remarked, they had plenty of wall-space at New Taormina.

London is not a good place in August if you go up to see your London friends. But you get more attention at the shops, and if you have a good car it is easy to sleep and rest outside London. In a week or two they transferred themselves from the *Savoy* to Roger's suggestion for the honeymoon, the *Dormy House* at *Sunningdale*, where they could have fine air and lovely scenery, and Grace could satisfy her love of exercise by taking lessons from the professional.

Her purchases had not been allowed to accumulate at the hotel; they had all been sent straight down to *Devonshire*. She and her husband were not to go back until she gave the word.

Though she had made a heavy sacrifice in marrying him, she had determined that he should not know it. She meant to honour and obey him if she could not love him—in other words, to accede to his wishes charmingly in private, and to show people in public that a spoilt-looking young beauty could be a devoted wife to a plain and middle-aged husband.

She soon found that she had little necessity for acting, that she seldom had the chance of acceding to his wishes, since as far as domesticities and recreations were concerned, he had no wish except to gratify hers, and that as for showing her devotion in public, it was done automatically, because she felt lost without him. If he did look awkward while he was following her about like a maid, he was never in the way, because he waited for her wishes to develop, and his interestedness and his drollery made him an excellent companion.

One day, when they were in their sitting-room, overlooking the pines, he thought that he had inflicted himself too much on her society ; he excused himself by saying, “ Never mind—I am not so faithful as an onion ! And you can ‘ set ’ me, if you want, like an alarm clock. I have a special line myself, called the Mosquito, which is very pertinacious with a heavy sleeper. We make the cases in our china, and the insect does the alarm with its tail—quite regular. But I mustn’t talk shop, or you will want me to drop the Ebbutt and call myself Mr. Richmond Lorraine. How does that sound, Gracie ? ”

“ Oh, not Gracie, please, Maecenas ! ” A minute afterwards she remembered her resolves, and said, “ I’m sorry I spoke like that. You can call me Gracie, or anything else you like, dear.”

“ How does *Mr. Richmond Lorraine* strike you, Gracie ? I like calling you Gracie because no one else ever did.”

“ That’s just it,” she said. “ Roger Wynyard used to call me Gracie to tease me.”

“ I’m sorry,” he said. “ It belongs to your and my Roger—the nicest youth that ever stepped.”

Grace was seized with contagious laughter. "You can call me Gracie as much as ever you like, if you promise on your word of honour never again to refer to any of my friends as *a youth*, Mr. Richmond Lorraine."

"Oh, I am serious about the Richmond Lorraine, dear. I married Grace Lorraine, and Grace Ebbutt don't sound the same article. Besides—sit on my knee a minute, Grace—I want to whisper something to you."

She obeyed like a child, and put her mouth to his lips before she put her ear—knowing, like a child, that it would be something nice.

What he whispered was, "It don't sound nice, Via Pacis belonging to anyone but a Lorraine," and he added aloud, "Over here, can you order a *noo* name, same as we can, like a *noo soot* of clothes?"

"No, you can't get them at Harrod's. You have to go to one place in Queen Victoria Street."

"I'll make a note of that," he said, pulling out a tiny notebook, in a sort of silver matchbox, attached—with his keys—by a chain to his right-hand outside brace button. In England these resided in his pistol pocket. "What's that address, again, Grace?"

"Heralds' College, Queen Victoria Street, E.C." She did not really know if that was the place where they changed your name, but she thought it must be.

"What a mighty queer place for a college," he said. "I thought it was built for the overflow of soft-goods people from St. Paul's Churchyard."

"The *Times* office is there."

"Is the Heralds' College behind the *Times*?"

"I fancy it is," said Grace innocently, not seeing his joke until she noticed his expression.

"Seriously, what do you think of my idea?"

She was still sitting on his knee, stroking, quite affectionately, the smooth, shiny grey hair, which always looked as if it had just been valeted.

"Well, seriously, dear Maecenas, I should love it, because it would be so soothing to dad's dignity for the place once more to belong to a Lorraine, and our children *will* be half Lorraines, won't they, dear?"

"All, I hope," he said. *Our children* was the most delicious music to his ears.

"We shouldn't be obliged to drop the Ebbutt, you know. It is quite usual in England to tack on an additional surname, like Ebbutt-Lorraine, especially where property is concerned."

"Oh, well, that settles it. We'll go up to town and order one to-morrow."

He was grateful for the warmth of her gratitude. He had never dreamed of classifying her actions into "spontaneous" and "unspontaneous." But it thrilled him when she showed any desire towards him.

They stayed away until nearly the end of September. Grace Lorraine—she *was* Grace Ebbutt-Lorraine by now—did not wish to return until she was sufficiently fond of her husband to create the right impression. At his age it was not necessary for their union to appear romantic; she had only to be affectionate and happy.

The first was easy. Richmond Lorraine had a nature which inspired affection when you knew him as a wife knows her husband.

But ghosts throw a shadow upon happiness, and there were ghosts at Via Pacis for Grace Lorraine.

CHAPTER XLVIII

THE NEW ENOCH ARDEN

ONE fine October morning in 1916 the only passenger in the closed char-à-banc from Seacombe Road to Seacombe and Via Pacis was an officer in uniform.

He had no notion that there was a motor vehicle running to Seacombe, but this was not surprising, because it had not been running more than a year. The driver and the conductor had not much to say about it because they had come down from Coventry with the vehicle.

There was no one about when it stopped in the village, except the bookstall boy waiting for the morning papers. Railway Bookstalls, Limited, were an even later institution than the char-à-banc. There were not many men in the village. The contractor's men were all middle-aged Italians, and they lived up the inlet, near his yard. No man of the fighting age was allowed to rent a house in the village, nor any family which included a man of the fighting age who had not gone to the war.

The officer got out here. He paid the conductor, and told him to inquire if his luggage had arrived when he went to meet the evening train ; it had been left behind at Paddington.

He then walked off in the direction of Via Pacis, but was just going to turn in at the Rectory gate when he caught sight of New Taormina, which began, close to where he was standing, on the site of the orchard where Mr. Ebbutt's cows used to graze.

He had heard nothing about it ; nor had he ever been

to Taormina. He thought that he must have taken leave of his senses again. He could not resist going up to have a look at it, though he had eaten no breakfast yet, having left London by the newspaper train in the morning. He lighted a cigarette before he started, and strolled along with an air of amused tolerance until he came to the first house—an odd-looking place, he thought it, surrounded by a very high wall, which had the peculiarity of containing two windows. He went up to one window and looked through it.

It was Hestia Myrtle's garden, and she was sitting in it, very lovely, in black, which showed up her wonderful colouring, and with her face full of expectancy, as it always was at post-time nowadays, when any post might bring her a whole sheaf of flattering press-notices about her music—as well as the news for which she waited. Morning after morning had she waited—ever since he had been reported “missing.” The very word “missing” seemed to bring his return nearer.

Suddenly the expectancy in her face broke into exaltation, for someone had come in at the gate and was advancing to meet her across the grass.

“Hallo, old girl!” he said. “Just got back.” It was the officer who had come from Seacombe Road.

“Oh, Roger, is that the way you come back from the grave? How like you, you old darling!” she cried, and flew to him and flung her arms round him, and hung on his neck, and kissed him until she had no breath left.

“I left the grave some time ago,” he said. “I made a long stop, I believe, at a place whose name I can never quite manage. The popes lived there for some time, but gave it up after three or four had had a try—I expect for the same reason.”

“Oh, Roger, it is you! Nobody else could talk such delicious rubbish at such a moment! Have you seen your mother?”

“No, I had to come and see what this funny show was. What do you call it?”

“It is all in Via Pacis, I believe; but everybody calls it the New Taormina.”

"Oh, my hat! Did Lorraine do this?"

Hestia forgot that he could not have heard about Mr. Ebbutt having changed his name, and said, "Yes," and added, "It was Grace's doing a good deal, I think."

"Grace Lorraine?"

"Yes."

"How is she?"

"Exceedingly flourishing."

"Good old Grace!"

She could not understand his manner. As far as he knew, he must still be engaged to Grace, but he said nothing further, except, "Well, I call it damned funny, putting up a show like this here! What's poor old Seacombe done to deserve it?"

"Roger," she said, releasing him—she had been hanging on to him all this time in her joy at seeing him again—"wait here for me while I get ready, and I'll go down to the Rectory with you. You must let me go in and break the news, or the shock to your mother might be serious."

"Right-ho! Is that your breakfast I see in the ground-floor back?"

"The remains of it."

"The remains of it are good enough for me. I see bread and butter and marmalade, and I suppose that there's something in the milk-jug, if not in the tea-pot? I have had nothing to eat or drink since I left the Tommy's Rest at Paddington, at something after five in the morning."

"Go in and ring the bell and order up some fresh tea and the cold ham. It will give me a few minutes more."

"Clever woman!"

Hestia went up to her room and routed out the brightest-coloured frock, the brightest-coloured hat, and the brightest-coloured sunshade which would in any way go together, and made herself look as ravishing as she could in them. Then she went down to Roger.

"Hallo!" he asked. "Changed places with the rainbow? Anyway, I like these football colours better than the *All-blacks*."

This time he put his arm round her and took a long

toll of her lips. Then he gave a big sigh, and said, "It's good to be back with you, little Hestia."

"Then why did you sigh, Roger?"

"For want of breath, stupid!"

"Oh, that's all right."

"Is it 'eyes front—quick march'?"

"If you refer to starting for the Rectory—yes."

When they got there, Hestia stopped by the great yew tree which stood outside the Rectory gate, at the end of the path across the churchyard.

"Stand behind that, Roger, till I call you," she said.

She rang the bell. "Is her ladyship in?"

"Yes, miss," said the parlourmaid, taking her to the dining-room, where Lady Cynthia, still in mourning, was picking up and folding the papers which the Rector, man-like, had dropped on the floor as soon as he had skimmed the cream of the war-telegrams.

"How do you do, Hestia? Why this sudden breaking out into colours?"

"Can't you guess, Lady Cynthia?"

The mother laughed, with a shaking upper lip and tears in her eyes.

"I know," she said. "It must be Roger come back! If it isn't, it would have been kinder to kill me."

"But it is! It is!"

The ordinarily self-possessed Lady Cynthia rushed to the foot of the stairs, and called up wildly, "Father! Father! Roger's back! He's safe! He's alive!"

The Rector—three-score and ten though he was—flew down the stairs so quickly that he seemed to shoot down the banisters.

"Where is he?" he cried. "Where is he?"

"I don't know," said his mother. "Where is he, Hestia?"

"In the churchyard, behind the big yew."

¶ Hestia was running forward to call Roger, when the Rector put two fingers in his mouth, and gave the ear-piercing whistle which he had been at such pains to teach the child Roger.

Roger dashed into the garden and into his mother's

arms. And when at length she could spare him, his grandfather seized his hand and began to wring it.

Suddenly he stopped and said, "What is this, Roger?"

"One of the celebrated Carne hands, grandfather."

"Where's your own, Roger?"

"In lines which used to be German and now are ours."

"Roger, I didn't notice that you had a false arm—I mean hand," cried Hestia.

"Oh, Roger boy, where have you been all this time?" asked his mother.

"I don't quite know, mother," he answered, coming back to put his arm round her.

She gave Hestia a significant smile, but Hestia was too happy to be easily disconcerted.

"Well, where have you sprung from now?"

"Rouen. I had to go there for my kit, which I duly lost again at Paddington."

"Oh, Roger, how like you! But before that where were you?"

"Aveenion." He put such emphasis on the *een* and the *on* that no Frenchman would have recognized the Papal city of Avignon; but it helped his mother and his grandfather.

"What on earth have you been doing there?"

"You may well ask. I was at the institute which they have started in the Palace of the Popes for people who have lost their memories by battle-shock."

"Had you?"

"I suppose so, but, of course, you never know. The only things I can remember are that we had stormed a position from the Germans which we could not hold, because their artillery had the range of it, and pumped shrapnel into us—a bit of it cut my right arm off just above the wrist. A plucky R.A.M.C. man who had stayed with us bound it up, and I started to retreat with the rest, but dropped insensible—from loss of blood, I suppose. When I came to I was lying with my forehead on my wrist-watch—the stem-winder was digging into it a bit. I was trying to shift into an easier position, when a wounded man near said in a low voice, 'Keep

still, sir—the German snipers are picking off everyone who moves.'

"I lay as still as I could. Day had not dawned very long, and there was another fifteen hours of daylight before it would be dark enough for us to shift. So I lay there with that little stem-winder grinding through my forehead to my brain—that's what it felt like. Over and over again I thought of jumping up and calling on the snipers to finish me off, the agony of lying as I lay was so awful. But I determined to stick it for your sakes, though I had little hope of ever seeing Seacombe again.

"At last night came, and I staggered up and made my way as best I could in the darkness to the point from which we had started out in the morning. Their star shells helped me a bit—I had to crawl most of the way.

"When I got there I found no trace of the Regiment. So I crawled on away from the German lines till I lost consciousness again. After that I can't remember anything till I found myself in a French kit in a small room in an enormous place, that seemed to have been built about the time of the Creation. A nurse who spoke English told me that I had been months and months in the place, quite well to all appearances, but suffering from a complete loss of memory.

However, one day I saw, hanging from this nurse's oxydized steel watch-chain, a long-bodied dog made of the same stuff.

"'What is that?' I asked her, and she answered, 'It is the crest of Lorraine.' I said, 'I know some people called Lorraine, and they had that dog carved and painted and in stained-glass windows—that was at Seacombe in Devonshire, where I live.'

"The nurses always have tablets with them to write down the smallest clue to a patient who can't identify himself, and she wrote this down. She spelt Seacombe 'S-i-k-u-m,' and Devonshire all anyhow, but I made out what she meant when she showed it to me, and last of all I remembered who I was, and they sent me up to the British base at Rouen, where they had my kit, carefully stored away for me, because I had only been reported missing, and

they promised that they would communicate with you at once, and gave me five pounds of the pay which had been accumulating for me, and shipped me back to London, and I came straight on home."

"But, Roger, there are some points I should like you to clear up," said the Rector. "First I want to know, was there nothing about you by which they ought to have been able to identify you?"

"Apparently not."

"What would an officer ordinarily have about his person which would identify him?"

"Well, first of all there is his identification disc; second, there are the marks on his underwear, such as shirts or pocket-handkerchiefs; and third, any letters or papers with his name on them which he may have in his haversack; and lastly, the badges on his cap and his tunic would show what Regiment he belonged to."

"Well, how do you account for it that you had none of these marks about you?"

"Well, as to the old disc, grandfather, I had taken it off my neck and put it on the curb bracelet that Grace Lorraine gave me on *that* day, which I always wore on my right wrist. Grace . . . how is Grace, the girl I am going to marry? . . . There, you see the tricks my memory plays me! I'm going to marry her, and I'd forgotten it till this minute!"

Lady Cynthia answered him promptly. "Grace Lorraine is all right," she said.

"And still living at Via Pacis?"

"Yes, still living at Via Pacis."

"Well, that's great," he said. "I had an awful feeling at that moment that something had happened to her. I always wore the disc on that bracelet," he continued, "and lost it with my right hand. So they hadn't my disc to go on."

"Well, what about the marks on your underclothing?"

"They, unfortunately, did not show my name, as they were just marked with my initials, R.W., which would not tell anybody enough."

"And what about the haversack?"

"I lost that when I was crawling after the Regiment in

the dark. It was not among the articles reported by the French as being in my possession when they found me, nor was my cap, and the badges on the collar of my tunic had been removed by relic-hunters. So there was simply nothing to identify me by, and they could do nothing but keep me there till I recovered my memory."

"And have you quite recovered it now?"

"No, not completely. When I test myself to see if my memory is getting better, I can remember some things perfectly well, and more of them every day, but there are gaps everywhere, just as if the Censor had got into my mind and blackleaded every other sentence. For instance, Grace Lorraine, whom I'm going to marry to-day—I've remembered and forgotten her twice since I've been talking to you. But I can't forget her when I'm married to her, so I'll go and fix it up right away. Shall I find her at the Abbot's Lodging?"

"No, at the Manor House. I'll go up with you if you are going," said his mother, breathing inwardly an anxious prayer to the Almighty that she might be granted tact at the supreme moment.

She did not telephone to Grace. In spite of the prayer which she had just breathed, she felt that it was Fate, not Providence, which assumes the direction of events at a crisis.

Hestia, the other party to this strange imbroglio, was so happy that she could have kissed the Rector. She went home a few minutes after their departure. She could await events. How fond of her Roger still was she had seen, and that was enough.

Lady Cynthia's heart was in her mouth. But Roger was the same cheery schoolboy that he always had been, playing tricks with the finger-joints of his wooden hand to try and make her laugh.

They went into the Manor House through the gardens, not up the avenue. Half-way across they saw Grace, pointing and giving directions, and her husband moving large pieces of water-worn limestone into position on a rockery which she was designing.

"She's getting on, isn't she?" said Roger, "making

old Ebbutt work like a navvy in carrying out her ideas in his garden!"

"He isn't Mr. Ebbutt now, Roger—he's Mr. Lorraine," said his mother, trying to afford him a clue.

"Well, I'm blest! Has he bought up their name, too? How did he manage that?"

"Just in the way you would expect."

"I don't follow."

"You're dead, you know—you've even got a monument in the church."

"I must see that before they take it down," he said.

"But what's it got to do with old Ebbutt calling himself Lorraine?"

Lady Cynthia did not answer. The stones were now arranged to Grace's satisfaction, and she was dusting Mr. Lorraine's clothes as if he had been her child, ending up with a friendly pat on the shoulder, and a smile which was as good as a caress.

By this time Roger and his mother were near enough to hear what the Lorraines were saying, but the Lorraines were too absorbed to have noticed them. Grace was saying, "You need not have done it yourself, dear. I meant you to tell the gardener where the mistake was—honestly."

"Ebbutt's 'commonsense china' wouldn't have been all over Amer-ricky and Canady now, if I hadn't put things right myself, whenever I saw them wrong."

"Oh, well . . ."

"Have you guessed yet, Roger?" asked his mother.

Roger smiled. "She thought I'd 'gone west,' and has taken on old Ebbutt—I beg his pardon, Lorraine? Lorraine in honour of the event, I suppose?"

He spoke with no more concern than if he had come up late for a dance, and saw the partner who had promised him whirling round the room with someone else.

"Yes, she's married Mr. Lorraine."

"She can't accuse *him* of never having done anything to earn his living," said Roger. "And as that was my only fault, she ought to be happy."

"Don't you think she is happy? Just look at her."

"Bouncing."

His mother wondered if Roger was talking flippantly to disguise the intensity of his feelings, or because of a lapse in his memory, which made him blind to his loss. For whatever effect she had expected the announcement of Grace's marriage to have on him, she certainly had not expected it to plunge him into rather boisterous high spirits.

At that moment Grace saw him, and, crying "There's Roger!" flew to him, with both hands extended. She almost wept at first when she felt the wooden hand of the great cricketer—and then felt a pulse of rejoicing that it meant his going into danger no more.

"Roger," said her husband, "I'm as glad to see you back as I should be to see myself back from what's going on over there. And that's saying a very great deal, because I was born with a homely disposition. You know that I've married your *fancy*, I suppose? I shouldn't have done it if I had thought there had been a dog's chance of your coming back—indeed I shouldn't, my boy; and if we was in Oregon, I'd va-cate right now, but it wouldn't be no use here, where marriages are spilt milk. Not but what I'm gladder than anything in all my life that you have these matrimonial restrictions, because I'd rather give up everything I've got than Gracie. But fair's fair, and she said she'd have to give me up if you came back before we *was* married."

"You dear old Maecenas!" said Grace, clasping her hands impulsively round one of his arms, "it's no good your talking of giving me up, because I shouldn't allow you to."

As she said this, she looked him in the eyes, and he saw that she was sincere, and a deep thankfulness settled upon his spirit.

Grace was not less thankful that Roger had returned, for though there was no man whom she would so soon have had for a husband as her own, now, she could not forget the years of buoyant happiness which she had spent with Roger, her more than brother.

Then she turned to his mother, and said, "Will you and Roger and your father-in-law kill the fatted calf here to-night, or must you have the boy all to yourselves?"

"I'd rather we ate our dinner with you, Grace. If there were only three of us the feeling might run too deep."

"How's Uncle Henry, Grace?" asked Roger.

"I'm afraid that he's happier without me. It allows him to take his duties as Abbot—I mean, Master—more seriously."

"Good old Uncle Henry!" said Roger. "I must go and rout him out of it."

"I think we had better telephone to him," said Grace. "Shocks aren't very good for people of his temperament."

While her husband went to telephone, Grace said, "I hope that you've been to see Hestia, Roger?"

"Been to see Hestia?" He told her how he had seen Hestia, and she saw it all so clearly that she almost laughed and wept. The gaps in his memory had not wiped out the remembrance of that strange three-cornered duel with Hestia and Grace, which had taken place in those last days before the war took him, and he wondered if Grace had ever guessed why the delay occurred which made her Richmond Lorraine's wife instead of his. There was only one way, he told himself, in which discovery could have happened—by Hestia's being seized with contrition and abasing herself before Grace. If she had done it, Grace must have forgiven her, or she would not have asked so solicitously, "Have you been to see Hestia, Roger?"

He decided that she could not know Hestia's story and what a villain he had been. Grace could not forgive a thing like that.

As Roger was going back with his mother to lunch, he saw Hestia sitting at her window. He felt that she was watching for his return, and called out to her gaily, "Will you give me tea in your garden, Hestia?"

"You can have tea here," she called back, "but not in the garden, for tramps sometimes look through that window, and come in uninvited."

His mother thought that Roger had fetched Hestia to break the good news to her gently, though she never would have believed it of Roger, like so many other things, before the war. But she had her boy to herself for the next three

or four hours, and had never known him so playful and wholly adorable.

Roger felt that Hestia must have tea at four o'clock, though when that time came he could not make up his mind to start.

When he got there at a few minutes before five, he found that the confectioners of New Taormina had been ransacked for his favourite delicacies, and Hestia was dressed to receive a tea-party, though the tea-party was only of one.

"The water is hot," said Hestia, as she struck a match and lighted the spirit-lamp under the kettle. "It will only take a few minutes to boil."

"Are you going to boil it yourself, because you were the Goddess of Fire in Ancient Greece, Hestia?" This was one of the odd freaks of Roger's memory.

"No, I boil it myself because servants choose such awkward moments for bringing in tea."

"Then haven't they anything to bring in?"

She shook her head.

Roger went to the tea-table and blew out the lamp.

"I've something to say to you, Hestia, and it oppresses me. I'd like to get it over."

Hestia, who had a very graceful way of composing herself on a couch, composed herself, and waited for him to begin, eyeing him as his mother might have eyed this long-lost son.

"Hestia," he began, "can you marry a cad?"

"Just as easily as I can marry anyone else," she replied, with a touch of her old mischief—"considering that I have a husband already."

"I mean, if you had divorced him, or he had been killed in the war, or anything, could you marry a cad?"

"I should have to divorce Mr. Cadbury," she said. "I can't imagine him risking his precious carcase in the war. A cad would seem like a king after him."

"I'm thinking of one particular cad," he said. "A cad who made a woman his . . ." he hesitated—"his victim, because another woman whom he was dying to marry had refused his proposal, and when the other woman changed her mind and said that she would marry him after

all, he was so carried away that he let the woman whom he had betrayed release him because she was so generous.

"I have never before in all my life," he continued, "known Roger Wynyard such a cad. I never knew that he could be such a cad."

"Being a cad is very often neither more nor less than yielding to the dictates of human nature," said Hestia.

"That's all very fine, but ever since I first went to school I have been professing and trying to practise a code which aims at making it impossible to do a dirty action."

"We are all human, Roger."

"I don't call it human to behave like a cad the very first time that your honour is put to the test."

"Though the victim was left with a horribly big and aching void in her heart, she even loved your weakness. She had feared that you were too lofty for her Aucassin-and-Nicolette world."

"I never heard of those people," said Roger simply. "But while I was killing time in the trenches—we always had to be waiting for the enemy—I used to think about it, and I used to say to myself, 'Roger Wynyard, you're going to marry the woman you have always loved, and she is one of the most beautiful women in the County, but there will always be a shadow across your marriage, because another woman has a greater claim.'"

"No, she hadn't," said Hestia. "She did not consider that she had any claim at all. To have been as your wife for a single day was the greatest joy of her life. And she could not marry you when you asked her, because she was married already, but married to one whose behaviour had given her the right to seek happiness with another."

"Hestia, I can tell you truly that I have worried so over my behaviour that when I learned that Grace, who was the desire of my life, had freed me from my engagement by marrying another, I could hardly conceal my exultation from the Mater. I felt as if my spurs had been restored to me, or whatever they do to knights who have been struck off the roll."

"I think that's solicitors, not knights. You want me to help you out, you ridiculous and sublime old dear.

Only promise to be mine for ever—I don't care whether you wait till I can get a divorce and marry you, or become mine without all that fuss—and I'll forgive you everything, if there is anything at all to forgive."

" You must get a divorce and marry me," answered Roger, very earnestly. " A man who has once betrayed his honour cannot be trusted. You must put it out of his power to betray his honour again."

" That's all very fine," said Hestia, " but suppose Mr. Cadbury doesn't give me a chance ? "

CHAPTER XLIX

WHAT GRACE TOLD HER HUSBAND

WHEN Roger went back with his mother to lunch, Grace felt that there was a little clearing-up to be done.

First she went and found her husband. "Maecenas, I hope that you did not mind my kissing Roger?"

"Kiss him whenever you like," he said. "You have kissed him, I suppose, ever since you can remember?"

She gave a little smile. "Except during our very brief engagement, I have only kissed him as a sister, and that not very often. I hated being kissed by men in any other way. I only kissed him as a sister this morning. I don't suppose that I shall ever want to do it again."

Mr. Richmond Lorraine had a sense of humour; he was also practical. "In case of accidents," he said, "I think you had better say good-night to him at the front door this evening, and take the opportunity of kissing him before me and in the presence of Collins.* That will put the matter on a perfectly regular footing."

He was surprised at the fervour with which she suddenly kissed him. "As you have shown your trust in me, I will show my trust in you," she said. "I did not love you when I married you. I dreaded marrying you. It was the most terrible ordeal which I ever went through. But you said that you were willing to marry me even if I could not love you, in the hope that love might come after marriage. So I made myself marry you."

* Mr. Lorraine's old butler was still in their service.

"Why?" asked Richmond Lorraine, in his plain way. An abyss seemed to have opened up at Grace's feet. How could she tell him the reason?

"I think I know the reason," he said, trying to help her out. "You had given your promise to Roger, and though you believed that all hope was past, you wanted to consecrate yourself to him all your life, but in your great generosity you vouchsafed to marry me because the desire of my life was to marry you, even without your heart."

"No, that was not the reason at all, my beloved husband."

He bent forward eagerly; the feeling with which she had uttered these words filled him with almost fierce happiness.

"What was it, then?"

"I had a presentiment, which amounted to a certainty, that Roger was alive, and I wanted to make it impossible for me to marry him, if he was. I hoped with all my might that I should be able to learn to love you."

He looked at her with such unfathomable affection that she added quickly, "And I am finding it—oh, so easy, Maecenas!"

"I don't think I quite see why you did it, yet."

"No, I haven't told you." How on earth was she to tell him without betraying Hestia? Then an inspiration came to her. "I wanted him to marry Hestia, because I found out that she had loved him so much better than I had. Though I did not want to give him up a bit, I felt that I could not deprive her."

"How noble of you, Grace!" he exclaimed ecstatically.

"Yes, I know that I behaved nobly," she said, with a naïveté which might have taxed the gravity of anyone less plain than her husband. "But it's the only action above mediocrity that I have ever performed in my life."

* * * * *

Then she went to speak to Hestia on the telephone. She was glad that Hestia could not scrutinize her face while she was talking.

"I have seen Roger," she said. "He is just his dear

old self. I don't think I ever had such a happiness in my life as seeing him back from the dead. But I am glad that I did not marry him, Hestia."

"Are you really, Grace? Do tell me why!"

"You know quite well already my great reason. It has been a blessing in disguise, I think, because I believe that I am going to be happier in the end with my husband than I could have been with Roger."

"Oh, Grace, I *am* glad!"

"But I did not ring you up to give you a lecture on my private feelings. I rang you up to tell you that Roger seems to take my marriage quite as a matter of course, so that there is nothing to stand in the way of your marrying him, if . . . I feel quite sure that he will ask you. I want you to come to the dinner which we are giving to-night to the prodigal son. He is your prodigal son, and shortly, I hope, about to become your un-prodigal husband. We will ask just the dozen, so that no accident may reduce us to thirteen—just yourself, ourselves, my father, the Wynyards, Lord Buckland—Lady Cynthia's brother—Brooke Sylvester, Rufus How, and two of the three who helped to save our lives—Mr. Bernafay and the little doctor. Will you come, dear?"

"Will I come?" echoed Hestia, with happy irony.

CHAPTER L

THE LAST CHAPTER OF VIA PACIS

THE reader may wish to know how the curtain fell on the chief actors.

Grace's father had suffered a fresh shock. The public trustee had informed him that there was a prospect of a very handsome dividend on the Union Jack Electrical Association shares, which had been taken over by the Government on account of the German connection, the British Electrical manufactories which Mr. Oppidan had closed down having been reopened when imports from Germany ceased. Such of the shareholders as could prove themselves bona-fide British were to receive their dividends. Among them was the naturalized Mr. Oppidan, who, fortunately for the shareholders' pockets, was still in virtual, if not nominal, control of the Association.

Henry Lorraine was depressed by the news. Having known the sweets of monastic life, the lying down and rising up with no thoughts of the morrow, he desired no other. The only way in which they could persuade him to accept his dividends was by inoculating him with the design of settling on his son-in-law's estate a colony of men broken in the war, to supply the markets of the rising community, and making provisions worthy of the founder of Via Pacis for their comfort and amusement, not forgetting that man is a gregarious animal. And there were those sums, which he had given to improvements at the Fellowship, which had been spent but never paid when the crash came. When he thought of them he shed tears of pride.

Hestia Myrtle had settled herself in her old rooms at Fleurdelys House when Roger's month of leave was up, and he took up his duties as instructor in war conditions to the new battalion of East Surreys which was forming at the Kingsburgh Park Camp. She told herself that she had to be near him because he felt so low at not being allowed to return to the front.

"Would you rather be fighting, Roger?" she asked, trying to keep the reproach out of her voice like a good Englishwoman.

"I don't want to lose my life more than anyone else," he said. "I never popped my head over the parapet to oblige snipers, but I hate not being able to fight until the war is over, or I am killed. I feel as if I wasn't doing my bit."

"Well, if you're going to teach trenching and bomb-throwing to the new battalion of your Regiment," Hestia replied, "you'll be doing your bit still."

"Yes, Hestia, but it isn't like risking your life for your country."

"Men are such contrary things. You've just said that you did not want to lose your life more than anyone else does, yet you're complaining because you can't go back and risk it!"

"There isn't anything contrary about it. You hope to come safe through, but you just don't feel that you are doing all you can for your country unless you are risking your life. However, the War Office has decided that no one who cannot put up a first-class fight is to go into the trenches, so there's nothing more for it but to do as much as they'll let you do."

Hestia spent the long hours, which she had to spend alone, in unremitting work.

People—except her agent, who was delighted with the amount of production which he could get out of her, and Mr. Ace, for whom she had nearly finished her new piece, "The Girl I Left Behind Me"—were thoroughly cross with Hestia. They thought that she had degenerated into a money-making machine. The absence of a woman as lovely and amusing as Hestia, who can also be

paraded as a lion, and has the means to entertain and be entertained and go everywhere, is a most serious loss to Bohemian society.

Once in a way she would make her appearance at a reception, but always attended by that officer from the Kingsburgh camp, who, cordial as he was, kept her out of the whirl of personalities and reciprocal hospitalities.

A few people went down to see her at Kingsburgh. They found her almost invariably alone, and almost invariably working. For Roger was too busy to come and see her except in the evenings, and on Saturday afternoons and Sundays. But on Saturdays and Sundays they had other fish to fry, while in the evenings only those who had cars came, and they did not arrive until after he had left.

He always left early. Hestia was so lovely and lovable that he could not trust himself to stay late. He had, when she had most unwillingly yielded to his paying a certain part of her housekeeping expenses, arranged to dine with her every night, coming in from the camp as early as he could get away before dinner, though he seldom reached her before six o'clock.

To be able to look forward to Hestia's society and these hours of rest at the end of the day's work, made life *couleur-de-rose* for him, for it let him throw his whole energies into doing his bit all day, with romance to crown the conclusion of his labours.

The affections, which a nice-minded woman is willing to bestow upon the man to whom she is engaged, were all that he craved. He kept an iron hand on himself in the accepting of them.

It was different for Hestia. In the long hours that she had without him there was work to be done, it was true, and she often did it with feverish energy, in her anxiety to make money for their future home. But composition, musical as well as literary, is introspective work, and into such work other thoughts will creep besides those of creation.

Her days were very long. From one o'clock onwards she never liked to be away from home, lest Roger should

come-in, as once in a blue moon he did, though he begged her never to wait-in for him. And though he left her before ten at night, force of habit prevented her going to bed before one. Why could he not spend those precious hours with her? That was what she asked herself every night when she read the confession which he wrote to her after that walk. It was well that she knew it by heart, for she had washed it out with tears. And why, oh, why, were they to waste the best years of their lives, waiting for a comparatively young man to be parted from her by death?

In Bohemia no one would think the worse of her if she was satisfied with a marriage before God instead of a marriage before man. And Grace Lorraine had said as much for her part. But what would Roger's grandfather, as a clergyman, have to say to it? What would Roger's mother, broad-minded as she was, have to say to her only child contracting a union of this sort, instead of the kind of marriage for which she had hoped?

After all, it came back to the point, what would Roger say? For if Roger said yes, what would she care if all the earth and heaven above and hell below said nay?

"Roger dear," she said to him that night, when she had played him and herself into a state of sympathy and exaltation, "what would your mother and your grandfather say if we did not wait for my divorce?"

"We shall never know, Hestia, because I will never wrong you again as I did that night."

"Why?"

"Because it was a backsliding from the principles I've been trying to live up to ever since I was a boy. Before it had been done twenty-four hours I was plunging deeper and deeper into lies and deceit—not to save my own skin—that I have never done—but to save the feelings of the women, whom I had wronged, from being hurt, and to reconcile claims that were irreconcilable."

It was the Octopus over again.

"It haunted me all the time I was in France. I have never been the same man since, until Grace cut the mill-

stone from my neck by marrying Ebbutt, and leaving me free to marry you without my having done anything unhandsome to her."

"But you can't marry me, Roger, and may never be able to: that's the rub."

"Marriage isn't only for the purposes described in the prayer-book with such an absence of reserve. Grace was quite right. Marriage is really to give us the companionship which we shall enjoy in our old age. And as I shall never feel dull with you, Hestia, and don't believe that you will ever feel dull with me, we can go on enjoying being pals, whether we can actually share a name and a home, or not. That's good enough for me."

"It's not good enough for me, Roger, and it's not good enough for England. I don't pretend that I am satisfied, but even if I was, we are not doing our duty to England. During the war hundreds of thousands will be killed, while owing to the absence of husbands, poverty, and all sorts of things, the birth-rate is much lower than usual. Do you think that two extra-healthy people like you and I, who are well able to support children, have a right to stand by? You are a man over six feet high, the pride of your school and your University for the activity and skill and courage which made you so great in sports. You have shown your fearlessness in battle; you have been showing the strength of your moral character this very minute. I am a well-formed and brainy woman, who has never known a day's illness. I cannot, as it is, have children, because I am separated from my husband, and he is not fit to be the father of an Englishman. You cannot lead me to the altar because I have this husband."

"I suppose that conscience would say that I ought to marry some woman who is free, and become the father of children. But I could not do it. I could not marry any other woman without wronging you in my own eyes."

"Conscience is one thing, Roger. It is like your code, but it does not go so far. But there is another thing with which we must not mix it up, and that is convention."

"I don't think I know clearly what convention means."

"Convention is the spirit of custom. But customs are not the inventions of people who see clearly ; they are not inventions at all : they are the habits formed by the blind following the blind."

"Yes, I suppose they are."

"Take my case. The blind following the blind have failed to see that if a healthy young woman is married to a man who is unfit to be the husband of a decent woman, and cannot live with him, there is no earthly reason why that woman should be condemned to widowhood as long as that man lives, and the nation be deprived of the services of an excellent mother."

"Yes," he said, but rather doubtfully.

"Well, am I, when I have found the man whom I think would make me the best husband of any man I have ever met, to meekly accept the decision of these wiseacres, and never fulfil the mission for which women were sent into the world, especially when the supply of the manhood of the nation is cut short by a great war ? I don't see it."

"And I don't think that I do now. Now that you have put the points before me, I don't think that when England is in sore need of children who shall grow up into men, or be the mothers of men, we have a right to stand back because of anybody's prejudices."

"And you surely don't think that a man ought to marry a woman who is nothing to him, and have children by her, just because he *can* marry her, instead of having them by a woman whom he loves but cannot marry ? "

"Well, if she is married already. . . ."

"She isn't married if her husband is a man with whom she cannot live. She is only a slave of the law."

"I wish I saw things as clearly as you do, Hestia. I feel that it is my duty to have children, but I feel as if I should be wronging you and be false to myself and my people if I did it. They never knew of my first fall from my professions, thank goodness ! "

"Go and ask your grandfather what he thinks," urged Hestia at last, in desperation. "I will abide by his decision."

"Yes, I'll do that, and I'll abide, too, by what he says.

He's a clergyman, and he has strong ideas about the duty of an English gentleman. If he says yes, it must be right. And one of the strongest things which is holding me back is that I could not bear to lose the respect of him and my mother."

* * * * *

Roger spent his next week-end at the Rectory. Under pledge of secrecy, he told his grandfather not only of the problem before his honour now, but of his earlier fall.

Harvey Wynyard listened without saying a word until Roger had finished, and then he said, "It is an extreme thing for a clergyman to say, but I think that Hestia is right. England claims you as a father, and Hestia as a husband. Who can say that Our Lord would not have included this case in his reply to the Sadducees, who had asked Him which of a woman's seven husbands, married to her under the Mosaic law to raise a family, could claim her at the Resurrection—' For when they shall rise from the dead, they neither marry nor are given in marriage, but are as the angels which are in heaven.' "

"Then I can do it with your approval, sir?" asked Roger gratefully.

"Yes, your country must come first. I would have given a great deal for your sin not to have happened, Roger—not that I would not gladly see you married to Hestia, for she is a noble woman, whatever she may have done in the past. But you know what I mean. . . ."

"Yes, sir, and I regret it more than anything I ever did in my life, except one."

"What was that, Roger?"

"Promising, after I had done this, to marry Grace."

"Oh, that was low!" said his grandfather, with the gesture of having a bad taste in his mouth. "It's a mercy that she had married Ebbutt before you got back."

"I think so, too, sir. Do you think I need tell my mother about that . . . ?"

"I don't think that you need tell her at all. The secret

is Hestia's as well as yours, and if you tell her anything, you must tell her all. Only the whole truth is the truth. When she finds out she may be very unhappy. You are not called upon to make her unhappy before she need be, for she might escape this knowledge."

* * * * *

It was Mr. Dryander who brought the knowledge of it to Lady Cynthia by an anonymous letter. He was mad with jealousy and rage against Hestia when he learned the news.

She went over to see Grace about it, for Lady Cynthia was of the kind who think clearly, and perceived that in a small place like Seacombe-cum-Via Pacis, at any rate, there was no living under false pretences for Roger.

"Have you heard the news about Roger and Hestia, Grace?" she asked.

"No," said Grace. She did not say that she guessed it.

Lady Cynthia told her, adding that this was the first she had heard of Hestia's being married already.

"What are you going to do?" asked Grace.

"The evil of beginning such a union," said Lady Cynthia, "is less than the evil of letting it end. My part, as a Christian and a woman, must be to ensure the continuance of this marriage as if it had been regularly solemnized. I have far too much respect for Hestia to allow her to suffer. But what will you do, Grace; what will Richmond do, if they come to The Myrtle House?"

Grace Lorraine smiled. "The law might treat me as an accomplice. If you'll excuse me, I'll go and tell Maecenas that the inevitable has happened, and bring him here to answer for himself."

When he came, Lady Cynthia asked, "Well, what do you mean to do, Richmond?"

"Same as I should if I was in Amer-ricky, ma'am. We should give her a divorce there in most if not all States, and we should consider that she needed extra-special sympathy in her *noo* lease of married life. As a citizen of

the U-nited States, I cannot alter my beliefs to suit the defective conditions of your laws. We propose to ask Mr. and Mrs. Roger to spend their Christmas holidays with us. She's Mrs. Roger, ma'am, if she isn't Mrs. Wynyard, and the name which Gracie will write on that envelope to-day will be ' Mrs. Roger Wynyard.' "

THE END

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